

NORROY

DIPLOMATIC AGENT



GEORGE BRONSON HOWARD

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"Yes, I love you—for *these*."
(Page 84)

NORROY, DIPLOMATIC AGENT

BY

GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

Illustrated

by Gordon Ross

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How Norroy Created a New Republic

CHAPTER I.

AN AGENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

At the first night of a very clever play, dealing with the curious career of a thief who might have been a gentleman had it not been for his predatory instincts, two men well known in the diplomatic circles of Washington occupied one of the boxes, and one of them watched the star of the play with that peculiar look which signifies that, somewhere in life, the gazer has met the gazed-at before and is trying to place him. As the curtain fell on the second act, the man who had been engaged in this mental feat slapped his knee.

"I have it," he exclaimed.

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His companion naturally inquired the nature of his possession.

"Why, the person of whom the star reminds me—what a certain man familiar to both of us might have been had he gone wrong instead of entering the diplomatic corps."

"Do you call that not going wrong?" retorted the other. "However, who is the person?"

The first man lowered his voice: "Yorke Norroy."

"You've heard the old story about speaking of angels," said the other. "Well, Yorke Norroy's wings are rustling."

He pointed to a man clad in the conventional attire of the evening, who had just risen from his seat and was making his way out. Seen from that distance, there was nothing particularly striking about him. Looking at him more closely, such an impression would be cast aside. There was something impressive in the way he held himself; and his indefinitely colored eyes

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had in them a certain commanding, almost supercilious look which stamped him as a man who did things.

His hair was cut very close to the scalp, showing a pair of small, very perked-up ears, which seemed to have almost human alertness in the way they apparently stood to attention. He was of medium height, neither tall nor short, although his excessive slenderness inclined to the first impression. His hands and feet were very small—almost womanish, in fact. His clothes were just a little too much the mode of the day, and one indefinably regretted that a man of his intelligence should spend the thought necessary for such ultra-fashionable attire. They had evidently been cut not a week before, for they embodied a new wrinkle in evening clothes which had originated at the period.

The objection which most people found in Norroy was that he was just a bit too sphinx-like in his facial expression, and that he had mastered the art of saying less in more words, when he chose, than any man in the

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circles in which he moved. It seemed to be Norroy's principal aim in life to persuade people that he was simply an idle butterfly of fashion, without any more brains than the modicum usually portioned out to men who make the pursuit of the fashions and the ways of the ultra-mundane their sole object of living.

When in Washington, New York, London, Paris, or any other city where the society folk of America sojourned, he was of them, one of them, and nothing more. Yet everyone knew that much of Norroy's time was spent in other places; where, he would not tell, but every now and then he disappeared, and questions were unavailing, for none knew or could learn of his whereabouts.

One day a party of tourists doing the Nile district found him at a place in Suakim, attired in the working clothes of a civil engineer and poring over maps. He endeavored to conceal his identity, but it was futile. Although they never knew his reasons for being in Suakim, various conjectures were

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raised, and a cloud of mystery began to settle around his head, which was increased whenever his mail began to pile up at his clubs, without an address being left where it might be forwarded.

However, no one imagined that his disappearances were due to aught but his own eccentricity. He was one of the Norroys of Baltimore. His sister was the wife of one of the leaders of the so-called elite; and it was naturally supposed that his income was large enough to permit him to do as he pleased.

As a matter of fact, Norroy had very little money of his own. No one save himself and his sister knew exactly how small was the amount which had been left when Granville Norroy's estate had been segregated into assets and liabilities. The brother and sister had told no one, but their style of living had not changed.

There were two ways in which Yorke Norroy might have earned a living. As an actor of serio-comedy parts in the local dra-

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matic club of Baltimore he had been approached twice by New York managers and offered fair salaries and good roles. As a professor of languages at a university he could have done well; it was a seeming gift with him, probably the old Norman-French of the Norroys cropping out at that date; he had been a brilliant scholar at neither "prep" school nor university, save in this one instance. However, it was small credit to him that he should have excelled in languages, considering the facility with which he acquired the accent and phraseology of any tongue.

However, Yorke Norroy did not fancy either of the two professions mentioned. There was something about the diplomatic service which appealed to him. Without mentioning his plans to anyone, he called on the secretary of state, a college friend of his father, and stated the circumstances. This was only a week after the will had been read.

You may search through the two gigantic volumes giving the names of employees of

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the different departments, bureaus and offices of the Federal government, but there are two lists which will not be found. The first includes the names of the men employed by the treasury department as "detectives" and "secret-service agents."

The sole object in the employment of these men is to give undesired publicity to others, and to accomplish this their own identities must be unknown. To hold one of these positions, utter fearlessness, fair education, knowledge of the ways of men, especially those of the criminal classes, and a great keenness and faculty of observation are needed.

A good many steps removed from the treasury agents are the other men who do not figure in the Blue Books. They are the "diplomatic agents" of the state department. To the qualities needed by the treasury agents, the "secret diplomats" must add linguistic ability, the appearance, conversation and faculty of being at ease, which marks the perfectly well-bred man, and the

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finesse of discernment which every diplomat must have. They are recruited from the cultured classes, naturally, and their identity is never known. They pose as men of leisure, know the people worth knowing in the different social centers, and generally act the part of the fashionable idler. Their salaries and expenses—which always far exceed those of the secretary himself—are paid out of an emergency fund.

It is but seldom that available timber for this particular branch of the service presents itself. The secretary saw in Yorke Norroy just what was needed. He explained. Norroy listened attentively. He left the office a verbally appointed “diplomatic agent.”

It was not long before he was given an opportunity. It took him to China and kept him in Peking for the greater part of a year; but he returned successful. Since that time he had circumnavigated the globe several times, and had been in almost every civilized country, some barbarous ones, and some entirely savage. He had been wounded sev-

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eral times, and had stood on the threshold of death in so many instances that it no longer served to be exciting.

His ten years of service—he was close upon thirty-five—had been a nearly perfect string of successes, with so few failures that they hardly counted. Rapidly advancing in his profession, he now stood at the head of it, the dean of the secret agents, and was always intrusted with the most important affairs.

“But why this need of secrecy?” asks the general public. “Why are not these things done openly by our accredited ministers extraordinary, consul-generals, consuls and consular agents? We have enough of them.”

The answer involves a long explanation, but briefly it may be summarized as follows: When Americans deal with Americans or Britishers, they know exactly what to expect. The honor of the Anglo-Saxon keeps him from doing the small, petty, tricky things which stand for diplomacy in other countries. These same countries reckon as

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recommendation for this branch of the service an ability to lie skilfully and in such a manner as to promise everything and give nothing. With such ideas, it may be easily seen that the United States must have men who are the equal in guile and cunning to their opponents.

On the other hand, this country cannot shoulder the responsibility for the actions of these men. A secret agent cannot appeal to his government; he takes his own risks and must stand by the consequences.

It had been four months since Norroy had been employed on a mission. He had spent his time since his return as he usually did—circulating in the set at Washington, which includes the diplomats, the army, the navy, and the folk who make their winter homes at the national capitol. He had backed a “long-shot” to win out at Bennings, and nearly ruined the bookmakers; had been twice arrested for speeding an automobile along Pennsylvania Avenue; had introduced a new fashion in silk hats; won the favor of

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the season's debutante, and then gone elsewhere, in order to be perfectly impartial; gotten up a set of amateur theatricals and received the praise of the critics by acting difficult roles; and had in other ways kept his name before the public as a leading light of the exclusive Washington set.

Through all this—save for the theatricals—he went with his customary impassive countenance and attitude of not being interested. Frankly speaking he was *not* interested. The round of social gayeties about Dupont Circle was beginning to pall on him, and he frequently entered the state, war and navy buildings by an entrance not generally used by the public, and asked the secretary if diplomacy were beginning to be straightforward. The secretary informed him that, as his rather large salary was coming regularly, he surely had no reason to complain. Nevertheless, Norroy chafed at his inaction.

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But the four months had barely elapsed before he received one of the messages to

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which he was so accustomed. It was in the early afternoon, and he had just finished attiring himself in the latest cut of Piccadilly breeches, preparatory to a ride to Chevy Chase, when his negro servant handed him a blue envelope. He recognized the handwriting.

"Something up," he said, with a tone of almost happy anticipation.

The note read:

Private library, White House, promptly at three o'clock.
Usual entrance.

The signature was that of the secretary of state.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF MANY SECRETS.

Although the center of super-civilization, and the city to which Americans point proudly as the most cosmopolitan in the world, Washington has its surprises in the way of ante-bellum structures which contrast oddly with the modern apartment houses flaunting their bronze cornices and snakelike fire escapes above the altitude of the highest trees.

It has been said, sneeringly, that Washington was built in a single night, and that from any altitudinous elevation it gives the idea of having been laid out on the Christmas-garden plan. Although this may have some germs of truth in it, there are houses in Washington—and many of them—that give evidence of the fact that Washington was once a city of colonial lords of the manor.

Such a house was the one on a quiet, un-

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frequented street, which, though abutting upon an extremely noisy, much-crowded avenue, nevertheless seems to have gone on its quaint old way with lofty disregard for the things which latter-day civilization has brought forth.

The house in question is set back from the pavement to some extent, and takes up the amount of ground usually allotted to three residences of its size. It is surrounded by well-kept firs and spruces and has graveled walks and box hedges of yew. A wide, comfortable veranda encircles the entire abode, and honeysuckle, verbena and morning-glories hide the drawing-room windows from the street. Many people pause to gaze at this house as a specimen of a real home of the old days, and the answer that is generally given by residents of the neighborhood, when asked as to its ownership, is that they believe it to be a club.

If the walls of the old place could speak, they might be able to tell a different story. Exceedingly interesting would be the mem-

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airs of the spirit of the house. But he has not written them, nor will he, so the full story can never be expected.

No one ever enters this house from the front in these days. There is a carriageway at the rear, and those having access to the house open this with a key. Had any members of the ubiquitous press been in evidence in the vicinity that afternoon, they might have noted two gentlemen, unmistakably the President and the secretary of state, enter by this way. Yet their carriages still stood without the residence of the secretary of war, a few blocks away, and no one had seen them leave that place since entering.

Half an hour after they had entered the main room of the house of many secrets, there was a light tap on the door, followed by three more, each softer than the one preceding.

The secretary of state arose. "Norroy!" he informed the Chief Executive, who sat opposite him. The latter nodded as the secretary unbarred the door. "Come in, Nor-

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roy," said the first speaker, and the secret agent, who was now in the frock coat and gray trousers of the afternoon, entered. He was greeted cordially by both of the dignitaries, and invited to draw up a chair to the table, on which was tacked a large map of the Central American republics, supplemented by the northern half of the South American continent. The map was lined and interlined with red and blue pencil.

"The President and myself have just discussed the question at hand at some length," the secretary began, his gaze directed to Norroy, "and he inclines to the opinion that you have kept in touch with this matter, making it unnecessary for us to go into little details."

Norroy's quick eyes had taken in the significance of the pencil marks on the map. "The canal?" he queried.

"Yes," agreed the secretary. "You know something of it, then. How much?"

In a few terse sentences Norroy told them all the public knew with regard to the ques-

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tion, and a few things of which the public was not aware. His auditors expressed no surprise at the extent of his information. They knew that Norroy kept himself informed with regard to all things of moment to the welfare of the United States.

“The President and I have decided that young Madison was hardly the man to grapple with such a problem as this has proven to be. However, when he was sent the matter looked simple enough. Now it has grown in proportions, and you are the only man in the service whom we can trust with it.”

“Thank you,” interjected Norroy, passively, and because it was the thing he was supposed to say.

The secretary turned to the President. “Shall I proceed with the explanation, or will you, sir?” he inquired.

“You had best tell it,” answered the Chief Executive.

“As your conversation of a few moments ago plainly showed, you realize the importance of the canal to the United States, and

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you also realize that it must be built by this country."

"Not by any other power," supplied Norroy.

"Quite right. However, you also know that another power has used, and is using, every means at her command to make conditions so that she will be the country to build it. This the United States could not suffer."

Norroy nodded.

"We own the strip necessary for use in building the canal. It belongs to this country, and is our property. The action of Colombia in dilly-dallying as she has done plainly shows the influence of Saxonia. We knew this, but not the extent, although we have a clearer idea of the latter now than we had before."

"Leak in the foreign office?" queried Norroy.

"Precisely; and this much has been brought to us through the leakage: There was a previous canal company, as you know, but the old canal was like the Mississippi

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Bubble, and its scrip three months ago was not worth ten cents on the Mexican dollar. But Saxonia saw in this old company a chance to further her ends."

"Bought up the scrip"—again Norroy nodded understandingly.

"Bought the controlling shares through the Bank of Berlin. That was the first stage of the game."

He paused for a moment to relight his cigar, and then went on:

"Now, our attitude toward the South American republics has been misunderstood. We have endeavored to sustain the 'big-brother' feeling, and to try to show that we were not trying to take hold of any of the weaker nations. Europe, especially Saxonia, has for some reason imagined that we were assuming this attitude because we wished no trouble with the Latin-American races. As a matter of fact, we do not. But there is no element of fear in the matter, as you know."

The secret agent remembered a mission to

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Chili and smiled reminiscently. He knew.

"Continuing on the same line of argument, Saxonia imagines that because we have been diplomatically civil and polite to Colombia, we consider her consent to building the canal necessary. As you know——"

"The United States has been twice approached by Panama revolutionists. In return for the strip, we are to back them in a struggle for independence. I was in Honduras six months ago," reminded Norroy.

"As I say, you know. But the United States does not care to—er—consider such offers, unless necessary. It only makes one more turbulent republic on our hands. According to the ethics of international law, we are perfectly justified in landing our own marines on the strip. It belongs to us. But this also we do not care to do."

"Naturally," observed Norroy, dryly.

"However, according to what we have gleaned from our informant of the Saxonian foreign office, things are rapidly ap-

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proaching a crisis. Herman von Ladenburg is in Bogota."

Norroy's face lighted up in smiling anticipation as he heard the name.

"Von Ladenburg—Graf Herman, eh?" he said, with a peculiarly unpleasant ring of malice in his tone. "He and I met in Caracas in 1900."

"Yes, I remember. That was when you were shot in the arm—by von Ladenburg, if I remember rightly."

"You remember rightly, Mr. Secretary," confirmed Norroy.

"He is in Bogota now. From all accounts, the Colombian Government is being rapidly persuaded into such action as will prevent any nation but her from building the canal, if Colombia has the say. The old scrip of the De Lesseps company will be used as the reason, and the familiar stand of 'justice for the first-comers' taken. That will delay the canal until—well— —"

"Until too late. I understand." Norroy rose. "So far as I can gather, Mr. Presi-

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dent and Mr. Secretary," he said, addressing himself to both personages, "there is only one thing to do; to discover just how far Saxonia has persuaded Colombia, and if the affair has gotten to such a state that other means are impossible. Well, our friends in Panama who yearn for independence, and our friends in this country who yearn to see a canal built, may be trusted to do their worst—may they not?"

The President tugged at his mustache. "When can you start?" he queried.

"In an hour," answered Norroy. "But if I may venture my individual opinion, it would be far better that I go from here to the capitol of Saxonia, before going to Bogota. I don't need to expatiate on the fact that I may easily pass as a gentleman of Teutonic origin. All that is necessary is to allow my beard and mustache to grow, to clip them and my hair *a la* Berlin, and to make a few changes in feature with the aid of the make-up box. My German is non-accentable. In Saxonia's capitol I will be able to

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furnish myself with Teutonic credentials and a passport; also a letter of introduction to von Ladenburg."

"The idea is a good one," said the secretary, thoughtfully. "Does it have your approval, Mr. President?"

"On condition that the trip is made as speedily as possible. No stopping over in Paris or London, Mr. Norroy."

The secret agent looked at him reproachfully. "I suppose my former conduct merits that, your excellency?" he said, with elaborate sarcasm.

"No, no, Mr. Norroy," negatived the President, promptly. "I merely mentioned the exigency of the case. You misconstrued me altogether."

"A Bremen and Hamburg liner sails from Baltimore to-day; one of the North German Lloyd from New York to-morrow. The latter is swifter," commented Norroy.

"Take the latter, then, by all means."

"There is nothing further, then?" queried

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the diplomatic agent, as he moved toward the door.

“Nothing further,” agreed the secretary.

“Then, good-day.” He shook hands with both of them.

“Pleasant trip!” called the President.

Norroy smiled—he knew the peculiar brand of pleasantness in store for him.

CHAPTER III.

HARTLEY MADISON PLAYS THE FOOL.

Some two weeks antedating the arrival of the Graf Herman von Ladenburg, Bogota—unwashed, untidy Bogota—had received somewhat of a surprise; for in the *patio* of the Hotel del Castellano there appeared for dinner an exceedingly charming woman in a gown which could have been created in no city save Paris, and there only by the most skilful *modistes*. In keeping with the sultry night, it was of filmy white, seemingly a mass of diaphanous drapery; and her beautiful rounded shoulders and slim neck were revealed beneath it. She was accompanied by an old woman, the apotheosis of the hired *duenna*, whose position with her was evidently nothing more than that of a servant.

Bogota is not rich in pretty women, and the dearth of well-groomed ones is a matter of sorrow to the foreign diplomats who happen to be stationed there. It so hap-

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pened that on the night of the arrival of the new beauty, a great many of the diplomatic set were at dinner at the Hotel del Castellano. Inquiries were speedily made of Senor Luis Cadero, to whom was intrusted the destinies of the hotel. "She is the Dona Ysabela de Tavera," was his reply, "of the De Taveras of Aragon. She is to live here."

A week later, the Dona Ysabela was installed in a *casa* on the outskirts of the town, and built on a spur of the mountains. It was an expensive place and had been erected by a former English *attache*, but the price seemed to be no objection to the dona, and the abode was leased by her for a term of three months. The following week came von Ladenburg, who rented the Casa de las Gracias, which stood but a stone's throw from the Casa de Tavera. Von Ladenburg did not appear to know the Dona Ysabela. Nevertheless, the second day after his arrival found him in the drawing-room of her house, conversing with her behind closed doors; nor was the *duenna* present.

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"So you have practically accomplished nothing," he said gloomily. "Practically nothing." They were conversing in Spanish.

"Nothing!" Her eyes blazed. "I have discovered that the supposed young mine owner, Hartley Madison, is the secret agent of the United States. You call that nothing, *amigo mio*?"

"But what have you done?" he insisted, with a wave of his hands. "You have learned nothing from this young American, have you?"

"Give me more time," she said. "One cannot accomplish anything of importance in two weeks. The young American comes to this *casa*—how many times a day! Once, perhaps, he will come—'A ride, Dona Ysabela?' Another time with his carriage—'A dinner at Del Castellano, dona?' San Josef! you call that nothing?" She clapped her hands for the servant, who entered.

"Wine for the senor," she commanded.

"Perhaps when you have drunk of the

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wine of Barcelona, a more pleasant spirit may come to you, Don Hermano," she said, her eyes laughing at him, as she proffered the box of tiny Russian cigarettes, lighting his with the same match that served for her own. "Be assured, *amigo mio*, that within the week you will be provided with the information you seek regarding the plans of the *Americanos*. Can you not trust me?"

The German, usually stolid as became his race, looked into the great brown, melting orbs, the expression of which was at one time appealing, seductive, and mirthful. He saw the full cherry-red lips form into a smile, noted the evenness of the little white teeth, and studied the curves of her lithe, rounded figure.

"*Mia cara Ysabela*," he laughed, "I am glad I am not to be the one on whom your wiles are to be used."

Had Hartley Madison known of this conversation, his visits at the Casa de Tavera might have ceased; but he did not know. Consequently, his fresh young American

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face, shining above his clothes of spotless white flannel, was a frequent sight at the abode of Dona Ysabela.

Madison had been two years in the diplomatic service and had learned some wisdom. This, however, did not include a course in femininity. To have told any man, no matter how sure of him he might have been, just what he told the brown-eyed Ysabela would have never entered his mind. But she was so frankly ingenuous, so interested in his work—because it was *his* work—that his tongue moved with a freedom that would have caused his dismissal from the service had it been known. But was he not the dona's accepted favorite? Had he not out-distanced all of the local *caballeros* and the polished diplomats of the foreign services besides?

Von Ladenburg made no open display of his acquaintance with the dona. He was introduced to her one morning as he rode along the Martiria with the French envoy, and she came by in her smart *carromata*. He expressed the usual pleasure; there was no hint

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on either side of past acquaintance. He seemed to have little time at the disposal of the fair sex, for each morning found him in the Chamber of Deputies, and each afternoon closeted with Don Eugenio de Esperasi, minister of the foreign office. He usually spent his nights at his own house, so far as was generally known.

It had been nearly a month since he arrived in Bogota when the last stage-coach from the coast deposited at the station in Calle Real a rather distinguished-looking man in a suit of baggy tweeds and an Alpine hat, cocked on one side. In the right eye reposed a black-rimmed monocle without a string, which gave the face an air somewhat akin to hauteur. The mustache was clipped short, and the ends waxed upward, and from the style of the hair it had evidently been cut last by a Teuton. On his different bags and boxes was plainly stenciled "H. von W., Arendorf, Saxonia," and large, red and gaudy stood out the luggage labels of a Ger-

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man line of steamships plying between Bremen, Caracas and Honda.

He was instantly besieged by the drivers of many and varied specimens of vehicles, each one decrying the merits of his neighbor's cart, and recommending his own. In their queer dialect, half Spanish, half Indian, he only understood half they said. "*Muy bien carromata, senor don,*" was the burden of the cry.

"Do you know the house of Senor von Ladenburg?" he queried.

"Is the senor a German? *Si, senor.*" One ragged *cochero* pushed himself before the others. It was evident from the fact that he recognized von Ladenburg as a Teuton that the *cochero* knew of the man. The stranger directed him to drive first to the hotel, and when that structure was reached, his bags and boxes were taken in hand by numerous *muchachos* awakened from their noonday *siestas* by the lusty hands of Senor Cadero. The stranger engaged rooms and signed his name in a rounded Teutonic hand—"Hilde-

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brand von Wolfgang, Arendorf, Saxonia.”

“The senor is a Saxonian, then?” queried the astute Cadero.

Von Wolfgang favored him with a stare, and without answering strode out into the *patio*, and entered his *carromata* again.

“He is a very grand gentleman,” murmured a nearby *muchacho*, conscious of the defeat of Senor Cadero.

Von Wolfgang’s call at the Casa de las Gracias happened at just the right time to catch von Ladenburg. The stranger presented his letter of introduction, and von Ladenburg, in the manner of a true Teuton, welcomed him warmly.

“It is a relief to see an honest Saxonian face again,” he declared, as his servant poured out warm beer into two mugs which were part of von Ladenburg’s luggage, “and to get this swine’s tongue out of one’s gullet and speak the language of the *Vaterland*.”

A man and a woman, both on horseback, halted under the open window.

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"Hello, Count von Ladenburg!" called the man, a round-faced young American, in a white linen riding suit. "May we cool off under your trees?"

"My trees are yours, Mr. Madison," answered the German. As von Wolfgang looked up at the mention of the name, and the woman's face met his, it was with an effort that he controlled his features and prevented the monocle from falling.

"They are two neighbors of mine," explained von Ladenburg; "an American who is interested in mines, and a lady, Dona Ysabela de Tavera."

"Yes?" said von Wolfgang, without apparent interest, as he screwed the black-rimmed monocle into place again. "A pretty woman."

The count agreed with him. "This letter from Mecklendorf states that you are on an exploring tour. How long will you remain in Bogota?"

"Perhaps a week, perhaps longer. I do not know." He rose to depart.

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"No—stay. I will present you to the lady. We will have her make tea—an English custom to which I am addicted. You will stay?"

"No," said the other; but von Ladenburg had already pushed open the windows and strode to the veranda. Madison was rolling a cigarette, and telling Dona Ysabela a funny story, the humor of which was lost in his imperfect knowledge of Spanish. Courteously von Ladenburg tendered the invitation, and Hartley Madison, dismounting, tied the horses beneath the trees and assisted the dona to the *balcon*.

When the tea things were brought forth, von Ladenburg introduced the stranger. He met Madison with a slight shake of the hand and bowed formally to the woman. She eyed him keenly.

"Senor Woofgan', we have perhaps met before?" she interrogated.

"I fear not, dona," returned the stranger.

"But I insist, senor. For faces I have a

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great memory." She busied herself with the tea.

"I make no such claim," said von Wolfgang. "But surely the dona gives me the credit of having the good taste which would prevent me from forgetting the face of a beautiful woman."

"Ah!" She looked at him, her head a little to the side. "So you can flatter, even though you be German."

"A plain hit at you, count," said the young American, merrily.

"Something of which you will not be accused, Mr. Madison," returned von Ladenburg, in like vein.

When the tea had been prepared, and the little party had disposed of it, Dona Ysabela arose to go.

"I live near by, Senor Woofgan'," she said to the newcomer, "and when you come to see me to-morrow perhaps you may recollect where it was we met—or perhaps may I?"

Madison assisted her to the saddle and

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they rode away, after which von Wolfgang took leave of his countryman, and entering the rickety *carromata*, bade the driver return to the town. When they were out of sight of the house, the German touched the Colombian with his cane.

"Slowly—very slowly," he said.

Obedient to the command, the *cochero* slowed the horse down to a mere perceptible motion, and in this manner they jogged along for nearly half a mile. Then the sound of horse's hoofs in the direction from which he had come rewarded von Wolfgang.

"Madison!" he cried, as the horseman passed. The young American reined in his steed, and looked at the occupant of the vehicle.

"Yes, Herr von Wolfgang," he said, politely.

"I have something to say to you—something of importance," said the German. "Dismount and give your horse to the *cochero*. He will lead horse and vehicle ahead."

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"I have little time——" began Madison.

"You have time for this, Hartley Madison," said the other, sternly, and in English.

Madison was diplomat enough to know that when a German speaks English without an accent—unless it be an American one—there is something unusual about him. He dismounted, threw his snaffle-rein over his horse's head, and gave it to the driver, whom von Wolfgang bade go slowly ahead.

"And now, young man," began von Wolfgang, severely, "there is considerable for you to tell me in the next few minutes."

"What do you mean?" asked Madison, vaguely suspecting trouble, and stung by the whiplash manner in which the words were spoken.

"I mean," returned the other, calmly, "that you have been bungling. Saxonia knows everything about her plans needful for her to know, and more than is good for the United States. Now, the leak doesn't come from the state department in Washington, as the President, the secretary and

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myself are the only three men who know just what the plans are—except you.”

Madison's face blanched and his hand trembled. “Who are *you*?” he asked, weakly. “You are not an American?”

“I am,” returned the supposed von Wolfgang.

“You?” Madison almost laughed. “You can't be.”

“My boy,” drawled von Wolfgang, “what do you suppose disguises are made for? I *am* an American, although I shall not pose as such in Bogota. But myself aside. You were sent here on a mission—to find out how far Saxonia had gone with Colombia. As it will not do for us to be seen talking together, you will tell me what you know briefly.” He slipped a seal ring from his pocket with the secret monogram of the service on it. “You understand that?”

Madison stared at the ring, recognizing it and realizing that this man was on the same errand as himself. A sudden fear took possession of him.

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"How far *has* Saxonia gone?" queried the owner of the ring.

The younger man laughed uneasily. "Oh, that's all poppycock, you know," he said, with a poor imitation of carelessness. "Gone? Why, she hasn't gone at all—not at all."

"Then, why is von Ladenburg—their cleverest secret agent—here?" asked the disguised American, dryly. "Do you imagine he has come to this filthy mudhole for his health?"

Madison's reply was incoherent.

"And, also, why is Bertha Freyhold, alias Renee de Montpensier, alias several other things, and now posing as Ysabela de Tavera, here? Eh?"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Madison, turning on him fiercely.

"I mean she is one of the most to-be-feared secret agents in the employ of Saxonia. That's what I mean. The fact that she and von Ladenburg are here at the same time means that some unusually large

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piece of deviltry is about to be carried out."

"I don't know who you are," cried Madison angrily. "But if you dare to insinuate anything against the character of Dona Ysabela——"

"You'll make an ass of yourself," finished the insinuator. "Yes, I have no doubt of it. That's the reason I warned you; for that is where the leak is——"

With a sudden cry, Madison swung his left arm toward von Wolfgang. The blow would have been a savage one had it reached the spot for which it was intended; but the one aimed at merely stepped aside and the next instant Madison's wrists were held in a vise-like grip.

"Madison, you are a fool," drawled the supposed von Wolfgang, placidly. "Why the secretary ever sent you here is a mystery to me. You are a drawing-room diplomat." He released the now thoroughly ashamed Madison. "Go back to your hotel, and try to realize what a howling young idiot you are. And keep clear of *cara mia* Ysabela."

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The speaker laughed one of his short, dry laughs, as Madison broke away and began to walk hastily down the road, his shoulders heaving with wrath. Presently, however, the look of amusement faded from the supposed German's face, to be replaced by one of real concern.

"A damnably clever woman with alluring eyes and a coaxing mouth, allied with the craftiest man in the whole Saxonian service—that's one side," he muttered; "on the other side, a hot-headed young fool enamored of the coaxing mouth, and blabbing secrets galore, and——"

He laughed again and lighted a cigarette. "The strength seems to lie in the 'and,' Yorke Norroy," he said, addressing himself.

CHAPTER IV.

YORKE NORROY SEES THE REMEDY.

"I will not talk of the subject, senor, to any save the accredited representative of Saxonia"—such was the ultimatum of the minister of the foreign office to Herr Hildebrand von Wolfgang.

"But you do not understand, general," said the disguised Baltimorean. "The letter which I have shown you clearly proves my identity. I am an agent of the German foreign office, as my letter states. I am here to act as a check on any measure which may appear too drastic. Above all, I was warned not to allow Count Ladenburg to know my real identity."

"Senor, I cannot discuss the matter with you." General Eugenio de Esperasi rose. The interview was clearly at an end. Yorke Norroy took his wide-brimmed Panama and walked out of the room.

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As he stood on the steps of the building, engaged in rolling a cigarette, he reflected with much bitterness on this decisive ending of the hopes of a week. For that time had he spent in Bogota since his arrival—in filthy, dirty Bogota—and this was his reward.

He moved aside to permit the entrance of other visitors, and stepped into the shade of two cocoanut palms which grew about the archway. Here, too, was a split bamboo stool; evidently this was the place to which watchmen withdrew in the heat of the day.

He sat down, brushed the tobacco from his white linen clothes, and lighted the cigarette he had just rolled. His active brain smarting under defeat began to plan ways and means.

The only encouraging thing that had happened was Ysabela de Tavera's marked preference for him over all other society. Strive as he might, he could not avoid the woman. He met her everywhere, and her eyes always had in them that languishing look which

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bade him tell her tender nothings. But he had no tendency in that direction, and could see no chance of her being useful to him, so he had gone out of his way to avoid meeting her. On the other hand, young Hartley Madison, madly in pursuit of the erratic little god, had evidently found her a trifle less responsive since Hildebrand von Wolfgang had appeared on the scene.

Norroy arose and walked slowly out into the plaza, past the chattering hucksters and venders and into the little park where stood the statue of Bolivar. It was a pretty place, and a secluded one at that time of day if one passed the outskirts and went near the statue itself. Here, in the shadow of the palms, he sat gazing at the statue of the South American patriot without any apparent admiration.

"It is absolutely disgusting," so ran his thoughts. "A whole week! I have spent a thousand pesos on the clerks and minor officials of the war office. The swine! they know nothing. They would sell it readily

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enough if they did. Then to approach Esperasi with the finesse and skill that I used, and to find the old beggar fully cognizant of what I wanted from the first, and then calling my game. What's left? Von Ladenburg?" His eyes took on an amused light. "As well try to beat the devil at pulling souls into Hades! I'm sorry for that little chap, Madison. He is a fool, but even a sensible man has a hard game at this."

As he raised his head and found himself looking into the eyes of Ysabela de Tavera, he was glad he had not done his thinking aloud.

"Strange, solitary senor," she said, playfully. "No, I pray you, do not rise. I am to sit down. I have a joke to tell you. It is funny. You will laugh."

She was in a riding habit of yellow pongee, with a turban of Panama straw, adorned with rosettes, set at a coquettish angle on her dark brown ringlets. Her habit disclosed a tiny, high-heeled riding boot, strapped and spurred, the little foot within

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tapping on the graveled walk. She was undoubtedly charming. Norroy could not but admit it.

“The joke is funny, but it will wait. First tell me, naughty *senor*, why you have not come to my *casa* to drink of my wine, and to tell me where I have before seen you.” It was evident that her Spanish was not of Castile. But in South America this is not noticeable.

“I? Oh, you see, *Dona Ysabela*, I am not what they call a ‘ladies’ man.’ When I came to *Bogota*, it was but with the intention of remaining a week, and pushing on. In that week it was necessary to accomplish many things. Had I known or expected that I should meet here so charming a lady as yourself, I should not have so limited my time.”

“Ah, you speak so prettily—yes, when I find you. But it is not you who come to me to say these pretty things. I come to you, and then you say them. Ah, *senor!*” She shook her riding crop at him accusingly.

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"You wrong me, dona, and you are not fair to yourself. You are out of place here. You should be in Paris or in Berlin, where there are men who have the time to do you the homage which you deserve. Here among busy diplomatists, anæmic revolutionists and travelers such as myself, no one has the proper time to bestow——" He spoke the last sentence standing; and lifted his hat at its completion.

"Ah, you would go again!" she cried, in accents of mock despair. "Do not go! And, besides, I have the funny joke to tell you which will amuse you." He seated himself, suppressing a sigh. His mind was in hardly the proper receptive mood for jokes—and especially the brand which was thought humorous by women.

"You know Don Eugenio, the general—as he calls himself? General! Pfugh!" Her pretty nose was elevated in a sniff. "He is always full of much mystery—and, oh, so important he is! Now, to-day—but a few minutes ago—I saw you go behind two little

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palm trees near the *palacio*, and as my horse was having new shoes put on him, I walk over to the little palm trees. But when I come you are gone. So, says I, this is one nice, quiet place where no one may see, and a comfortable little stool, so here I will sit and smoke my little cigarette. So I open this little case"—she touched a tiny silver box suspended around her neck by a chain—"I take out this box and I smoke. Then comes Senor Hermano—I cannot call his surname, it is too hard—and he is going in, and along comes the great General Eugenio, and he is going out. The great general stop Senor Laden—Senor Hermano—and draw him very near where I sit.

"‘You know the Senor von Woofgan?’"
he say to Senor Hermano.

"‘*Si*, general.’"

"‘To-day he come to me and ask me about many things he should not know—say he belong to foreign office, the same as do you.’"

"Then Senor Hermano wrinkle his brow.
‘I must find out,’ says he, very stern. ‘I

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must cable to the foreign office.' And with that he go immediately to find out whether or not you be a spy." She laughed merrily. "It is so funny. That you should be a spy—you, the traveler and the man who wears the little eyeglass. It is so funny." She began to laugh again. It was quite evident that she told the story in good faith, and that the idea that Herr Hildebrand von Wolfgang was a spy was amusing to her.

The supposed gentleman of Arendorf joined in her mirth, and she continued:

"Eugenio, he is so foolish—so foolish. You go ask him one or two little questions—he thinks you are a spy." Her teeth showed amiably.

Norroy smiled, too, but his amusement was derived from a different source than was hers. That this astute woman of the world, playing the innocent so kittenishly, should be deceived into thinking the matter a joke, was the point that tickled his risibilities.

"And now, senor,"—it was she who arose

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this time—"when do you come to my *casa*?"

He reflected; after all, something might be gained from her. It would do no harm to try. "To-night," he replied, briefly.

"To-night"—she hesitated for a moment —"I——"

"Another night, then. You entertain some one else to-night?"

She tossed her head. "It is only that foolish boy, Senor Madison; he is to dine with me. He is so insistent that I cannot refuse him. But I can be rid of him by eight o'clock."

"At eight, then. *Adios*, Dona Ysabela."

"*Adios*," she said prettily, and went out to meet her servant, who was advancing with the horse.

Norroy seated himself again. Here indeed was room for thought. Hartley Madison had that morning received important dispatches from the state department. Norroy had recognized the seals when he stood by his young *confrere* in the post office. He was to dine with her to-night. Assuredly

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then, whatever he knew would be wormed out of him during that time.

And so von Ladenburg had telegraphed to the foreign office for information concerning von Wolfgang! Norroy smiled grimly. Here indeed was the thing which he had most hoped for, and perhaps the thing which would deliver his enemy into his hands.

He walked swiftly to his hotel, and from an inner compartment of his steamer trunk took out a padlocked iron box. From this he extracted a sheaf of mimeographed leaves, bound together with red tape—the secret code of the Saxonian foreign office, which had taken him three months and some few thousand dollars to procure, a year before. He was quite aware of the fact that von Ladenburg had not intrusted his query to the wire in anything save code words. Norroy placed the sheets in the inner pocket of his coat, buttoned it up, and, hailing a *carromata*, was driven to the *telegrafo*.

Norroy had taken the precaution to bring with him a number of double eagles, and

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after the course of a few moments' private conversation with the slink-eyed cable clerk, two of these found their way into the latter's pocket, and Norroy was given a yellow slip bearing a number of unfamiliar German words, the only ones recognizable bearing his own name and the signature "Laden." He placed the file copy of the cable on the desk, and took out the code book. After half an hour's steady search, he finally made the message read:

Wittschaeft, Arendorf: Man claiming to be Hildebrand von Wolfgang, agent Arendorf office, here. Is claim correct? I suspect him. Answer immediately.

Laden.

Norroy touched the bell at his side, and the clerk entered. "Give me a receiving blank," he said. The clerk handed him a pad of them, and after carefully culling a number of words from the book, he concocted another message, supposititiously an answer to von Ladenburg's query regarding him:

Ladenburg, Bogota: Von Wolfgang authorized look into Central Colombian matters. Does not supersede you in Bogota. Consult with him. Wittschaeft.

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He rang the bell again and addressed the yellow-skinned clerk.

"There will be an answer to this cablegram," he said, slowly. "It will be addressed to Senor von Ladenburg, and will be signed Wittschaeft."

"*Si, senor,*" agreed the clerk.

"When it comes, you will deliver it not to Senor von Ladenburg, but to me. When it is delivered, I will pay you——" He mentioned a sum large enough to tempt the Colombian.

"But the senor will expect an answer?" asked the clerk, indecisively.

"Quite so. You will take this message." He handed him the one he had just written.

"You will copy it on another receiving blank. When the answer arrives for Senor von Ladenburg, you will send him the message you have copied—this message. *Sabe?*"

"*Si, senor,*" said the clerk, joyfully, as he saw a way to gain the promised pesos without incurring any trouble for himself.

"Remember," warned Norroy, solemnly,

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“if you do not do this thing exactly as I tell you, the money will be lost to you, and, besides, I will inform of you having allowed me to read a filed message. So be careful, Gonzalez, be careful.”

“It will be done exactly as the senor says,” asserted the clerk, with fervor. “I, myself, will deliver to him the message as I receive it.”

Norroy was perfectly sure that he would. He had been careful to make the bribe large enough. It was not probable that Pedro Gonzalez, with his seventy pesos a month, would take any chances of losing more than he could earn in half a year at the *telegrafio*.

Seated in the *patio* of the hotel, sipping his brandy and soda, Yorke Norroy looked on the world more cheerfully than he had for a week past. Things seemed to be more favorable to his success than he had anticipated.

For the past six days he had haunted the telegraph room, hoping that von Ladenburg would send something to his office

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which would yield him information; hoping that he would send a wire regarding himself; but up to now von Ladenburg had sent nothing. Now he would receive the answer which Norroy had concocted, and, unless he had formed a false estimate of the man, he would find it necessary to consult with him as directed by the telegram.

Once Norroy could induce him to talk on the question, the American's knowledge of men and affairs at Arendorf would put all doubts to flight in the German's mind.

Norroy was nearly sure that a secret agreement was being, or had been drawn up between Colombia and Saxonia; that the deal had not yet been quite consummated was perfectly evident by the fact that both von Ladenburg and Ysabela still remained in Bogota. Such an agreement would necessarily have to be signed by the heads of both countries, and would be carried only by trusted persons. There would be no chance of its being consigned to the mails, therefore one of the two secret agents of Saxonia must

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perforce leave Bogota and carry the paper to Arendorf. If von Ladenburg would only talk, something might be done; but to act on pure theory was a method of procedure liked by neither Norroy nor the government which employed him.

After he left the telegraph office, Norroy had found that von Ladenburg was in consultation with the *presidente* and General Don de Esperasi. A later visit to the *palacio* had revealed the fact that they were still there. It was now six o'clock. Von Ladenburg had been at the palace since one. Surely that betokened that something unusual was on hand. Ease-loving South Americans dislike to spend five hours at a time in an office.

A servant touched Norroy on the shoulder, and informed him that another senor awaited him in the reading room. Norroy arose and went to the apartment indicated where he found Pedro Gonzalez. There were no other people in the room, so the Colombian, after looking stealthily around, thrust an

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envelope into the supposed German's hand, and received in exchange the sum that had been promised him.

"Senor Ladenburg," whispered Gonzalez; "he have sent to me for the answer. He is now at the *palacio*. To him I send the answer which you, senor, write in my office. *Bueno?*"

"*Muy bueno*," agreed Norroy, as he added another coin to the ones in the hand of the unscrupulous clerk. "Not a word about this to anyone, Gonzalez," he added sternly.

The clerk showed his yellow teeth in a grin. "Perhaps I lose my place, I tell; perhaps I get knife stick in back. *Quien sabe?* No fear, senor. *Adios.*"

He departed by the back entrance as he had come, and Norroy betook himself to his room to translate the message he had received. When he finished his task, his look was one of relieved amusement.

"Lucky *that* didn't reach my German *confrere*," he muttered, and indeed it was. The message denied all knowledge of von

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Wolfgang, and advised von Ladenburg to probe carefully into the matter and discover who he was. It was also added, suggestively: "Yorke Norroy, American secret agent, disappeared from Washington a month ago. You know his aptitude for languages and disguises."

Norroy's watch revealed the fact that it was now approaching seven o'clock. As the Casa de Tavera was some miles from the hotel and on the outskirts of the town, he began to change his linen clothes for others adapted to riding. Just as he pulled on his high-heeled, patent-leather riding boots, there came a knock on the door, and one of the barefooted *muchachos* informed him that the Senor von Ladenburg desired to see him.

Norroy smiled anticipatigly, and bade the boy admit him. A moment later the heavy frame of the Saxonian stood in the doorway.

"Come in, my friend," said Norroy, pleasantly.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH SOMETHING IS LEARNED OF AN AGREEMENT.

Von Ladenburg seated himself near the window, and accepted the cigar which Norroy offered him. The American excused himself for his negligee.

"I am to visit the Dona Ysabela to-night at eight," he informed the German, "and I was making ready. I have not yet dined, so I will, with your permission, dine here, and I hope that you will join me."

"Nor have I dined," said the Saxonian. "And to dine with you, I will be pleased."

Both spoke in German, as befitted two sons of the *Vaterland* in a strange land. Von Ladenburg seemed to be in a genial mood.

"I have been at work this day," he said, mopping his brow.

"Ah!" said Norroy, politely.

The German lowered his voice and whispered the password of the Saxonian foreign

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office. Norroy gave the answer, another item culled from the code book. The Saxonian held out his hand, and Norroy grasped it.

“Why did you not tell me before?” said von Ladenburg, reproachfully. “I have suspected you of being”—he burst into uproarious laughter, but finally choked out—“an enemy to Saxonia. This day I have wired to Wittschaeft, and now I know I am in the presence of a brother.” He looked at Norroy admiringly. “You are clever, Wolfgang, clever—and secretive. That is what we need; but you should have informed me. I might have aided you.”

“My orders were otherwise,” said Norroy calmly. “Wittschaeft believed that two men working along different lines would help each other more if one was unaware of the existence of the other. So you see, he was right. To-day has proved it.”

“To-day? What do you mean?” asked von Ladenburg, stolidly.

“Am I blind? To-day you persuaded the

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presidente to the final end. Am I right?"

The German eyed him impassively.

"I do not seek information on the subject," said the supposed von Wolfgang, as he gave the order for dinner to the boy who answered his ring. "It is enough for me to know that the affair is now at an end."

He glanced at the Saxonian, who still puffed placidly at his cigar.

"There is, of course, but one thing now to do—that is to convey the document to Arendorf. For you to leave now would not be wise."

"Why?" demanded von Ladenburg, roused out of his almost dormant state.

"Why?" There was much scorn on the face of the disguised American. "Why? Can you, the man who engineered the Caracas affair, who succeeded in Alsace when others failed, who created the last trouble in the Balkans, ask why?"

Von Ladenburg's face showed that he was impressed, but he said nothing. Norroy continued:

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"There is a man here named Madison who you told me was a mine owner, but who I have discovered is an agent of the United States."

"He is a fool," put in the Saxonian.

"Quite so. He is a fool, and Bertha Freyhold has used him to advantage."

"Bertha Freyhold!" Von Ladenburg started to his feet. "So you know that, too!"

The supposed von Wolfgang eyed him almost pityingly. "Know that? Do you think me a fool, too? As I say, Bertha is clever, and she has used him. But although he is an easy tool, he has sense enough to realize the purpose that brought *you* to Bogota. He also must know that you would not leave until that purpose was accomplished. Is it not so?"

The expression on von Ladenburg's face showed that the idea was new to him, and also that it was one worth considering. He toyed with the food which had been placed before them.

"Who, then, is there to send?" he asked.

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“Who? Why, Bertha, naturally. Her usefulness here is finished. The object of your trip is consummated. What, then, is the need of knowing further regarding the United States? The main thing is to keep them ignorant of the fact that the agreement has been signed; for you to remain in Bogota; to continue to make daily visits to the *palacio*; to lead this young American on and allow him to imagine that you have not succeeded and have no immediate chance of so doing. What would happen if the United States were to know now that this agreement had been signed?”

The Saxonian did not answer him. Norroy's voice took on a sneering, mocking tone:

“And you are the man whom Wittschaeft regards as his right arm! You are the man who is considered the best of all the secret agents of Saxonia, and you do not realize your danger.”

The sneer had its effect. Von Ladenburg was stung into replying: “Know? Naturally I know, but I do not care to discuss

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such matters where there may be listeners.” He sunk his voice. “The United States is ready any minute to create a revolution in Panama, and support the revolutionists. This she would do now if she realized what was done to-day.”

“Exactly. And you would leave Bogota!” The mocking tone was still effective.

“You are mistaken. I had intended this night to give the paper to Bertha. She has to-night at her house this young American. To-day he received dispatches from his state department.” His voice sank to the lowest possible hearing tone. “You realize we must know what are in those dispatches.”

“Naturally.” Norroy paused in the act of eating his salad. “Naturally. But with that ends Bertha’s usefulness here, does it not?”

“You are right,” murmured the Saxonian. The boy brought them the coffee, and disappeared.

Von Ladenburg looked at Norroy with a puzzled expression. “I do not understand

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why Wittschaeft has never spoken of you before. You seem to know all that I do; you are fertile of resource——”

“I am related to the crown,” answered Norroy; “my name is not von Wolfgang, but one that you know quite well at court. Naturally, it is necessary to keep my connection with the foreign office a secret, even from its most trusted agents.” Norroy had known that von Ladenburg would eventually ask this question, and, always prepared, he had concocted this explanation as the easiest told and most plausible one. Von Ladenburg looked satisfied, and his manner became suddenly tinged with respect. The feudal system is still strong in Saxonia.

Norroy arose and took his hat and riding crop. “I am going now to see Bertha. Not officially, Ladenburg.” He smiled to give the words the desired meaning. Von Ladenburg smiled, too, almost deferentially. Although he was a noble by birth, and an official high in the service of Saxonia, he knew when he had met his superior in intelligence,

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and when that fact was added to the confession of birth, it made his companion a man with whom it was worth keeping on the best of terms. Nevertheless, his naturally secretive nature and long training kept him from informing Norroy any further on the subject than he already knew.

"It is probable that she has sent the American away by now," remarked Norroy, as they moved toward the courtyard. "You are riding, too, Ladenburg?"

"Yes;" then after a moment's hesitation: "I go, too, to see Bertha; but on other business than that which occupies you. Tell me, does she know of your identity?"

"No," answered Norroy. "I saw no need to tell her. Women should not be trusted any further than necessary."

The Saxonian approved silently. Every sentence that Norroy uttered raised him a peg higher in von Ladenburg's estimation.

They mounted their horses, tossing a peseta apiece to the stable boys, and rode toward the Casa de Tavera. As they turned

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into the carriageway and neared the house, the glow of two cigarettes was seen near the veranda.

"The two men whom I hired to guard the house," explained the Saxonian. "It is best always to have ruffians at hand who scruple at nothing."

The two men advanced at von Ladenburg's whistle. They bore carbines in their hands. They were directed to tie the horses beneath the trees, and Norroy and his companion ascended to the veranda, the latter touching the bell.

"Dona Ysabela," said the Saxonian to the swarthy maid who answered the summons. They entered the little drawing-room, and the maid lighted a red-shaded lamp and retired. A frou-frou of skirts was heard, and Dona Ysabela, attired in a low-cut gown of pale violet, with a knot of violets at her breast, entered the room.

"Ah, Senor Woofgan'," she said, in a pleased tone.

"It is better she should know now," whis-

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pered von Ladenburg to Norroy. In a few sentences he told her of the supposed identity of von Wolfgang. She turned to him with a look of evident admiration.

"Ah, I knew!" she said, in playful tones. "I knew. Mysterious ^{the} one——"

"Just a moment," interrupted von Ladenburg, drawing her aside, and speaking in a low tone, although it was perfectly audible to Norroy. "Here is the agreement at last. Take it. You must start for Arendorf to-morrow. What have you learned from the young American?"

"Nothing," she answered. "He is not yet sufficiently intoxicated. In a moment I will bring him into this room. He has been dining with me."

"I will return," said von Ladenburg. He turned to Norroy. "I will not interrupt you long when I come back. Meanwhile——"

"Meanwhile if you will but go into my little boudoir at the head of the stairs, Herr Wolfgang," said Ysabela, in German, "but for a half hour! Then I will be at leisure."

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You understand that state affairs are always before pleasure." She smiled languishingly.

"Certainly, Fraulein Bertha," he agreed. "If you will but show me the way——"

She thrust the paper which von Ladenburg had given her into the bodice of her gown. "*Auf wiedersehen*, Herman," she said, as he made for the door, and then led the way to the head of the stairs and pointed out to Norroy a little room close by.

"For a very short while," she whispered, and, kissing her fingers to him, descended.

The door closed behind von Ladenburg. Norroy heard the rustle of her skirts on the stairs, and, walking to the balustrade, he saw her vanish into the drawing-room. Immediately after, he caught the sound of a man walking unsteadily along the lower hall. "Ysabela," came the voice of one who seemed to be in doubt as to his whereabouts.

"Madison!" said Norroy, with conviction. "And now——"

"*Si*, Senor Madison," came the clear

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tones of the siren.

"The young fool is drunk," commented Norroy, mentally. "Drunk, in love and in the possession of information which she wants. What a terrible combination!"

Making up his mind instantly, he stepped noiselessly out of the room, tested the balustrade, found it steady, and, smiling reminiscently as he remembered his boyhood days, slid down it without a sound. At the foot of the stairs he took a rapid survey of the situation, and, remembering that there was another room partitioned off from the little drawing-room by portieres, walked softly down the hall, and carefully turned the knob of the third door.

He found himself in total darkness save for a tiny ray of light that issued from an opening in the portieres. Then, lying flat on his stomach, he wormed himself along the floor and slightly lifted the edge of one of the curtains. He heard voices within.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UTTER ROUT OF SAXONIA.

"I couldn't wait any longer, Ysabela," said the young American, unevenly, as he sat down on a divan. "I couldn't stay out there when you weren't there, m'dear." He surveyed her owlshly, with eyes bedimmed with over-excess of wine.

"And I did not want to leave you," she cooed softly, as she sat down beside him. "But I had a caller who wished to see me at once, and whom I could not send away—"

"Who was he?" asked Madison, with the quick suspicion of a man in love.

She hesitated for a moment at the direct challenge; then her quick wits supplied the answer: "Senor Woofgan'," she replied.

Madison scowled. "That man!" he said. "You beware of that man, Ysabela. He is

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not—good man. I know him—not good.” His accents were heavy.

“What do you mean?” she asked, quickly. But Madison was not far enough gone to reveal von Wolfgang as an American.

“Bad man,” he said vaguely. “Knew him in Paris. Devil with women.”

She looked relieved, and the bearer of the name of Wolfgang, peeping out from the portieres, had a narrow escape from chuckling.

“It is getting late, Senor Madison,” she said to the young American. “You have been here now three hours.”

“You want me to go?” queried Madison, attempting to rise, but falling back on the divan again. “You want me to go, then you have Wolfgang come back.” He looked at her sorrowfully, and shook his head.

“No, Senor Madison,” she began.

“You call me Senor Madison, too,” pursued the injured one in tones of reproach. “When I ask you to call me Hartley—Hartley——”

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"I will call you Har'ley, then," she said.
"But now you must go, *caro mio*."

"Go! Go! Before I tell you what I have in my heart for so long. No! First I will tell you. I love you, Ysabela." His drunkenness fell away from him like a cloak, and his young face lighted up with earnestness. "Yes, I love you, Ysabela." He tried to take her in his arms, but she eluded him and walked over to the table, where the rays of the red-shaded lamp shone upon her hair and reflected back their own color glorified. Even Norroy, peeping out from the portieres, could not deny that the picture was an alluring one.

Madison advanced, still a trifle unsteadily, with arms outstretched. "I tell you I love you, Ysabela," he cried, fervently. "Yes, I have loved you ever since I first saw you in the *patio* at the hotel. I know I am not up to much—hardly worth anything, dear one, but I have a small income, large enough for two, if we were careful, and I want you to marry me. I'll shake this diplomatic

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service, and we'll go to New York to live." In his excitement he fell to talking English, but she understood him, nevertheless. "We'll take a cottage down on Long Island."

She approached him. "Ah, Har'ley, Har'ley dear, how do I know you mean what you say? You have tasted much wine this evening, *caro mio*."

"Believe me. It is that which has given me the courage to tell you that I love you!" he cried. "Before, I dared not. I was afraid of destroying the little heaven in which I was living, and plunging into hell. But now"—he drew closer to her—"now you must not refuse me." His arms went about her neck, and his lips met her full, cherry-red ones. "Darling!" he cried, rapturously.

Slowly her little hands crept to the pockets of his dinner coat, deftly they extracted a bunch of letters, and quickly they tossed them beneath the table, where they lay unnoticed by any save her and the man who

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was watching behind the portieres. She wrenched herself free.

“You must go now, *carita*,” she said, softly. “Go, and come again to-morrow. Then if you tell me what you have to-night, you shall have an answer. Go. See—there is your cloak.”

As he turned she stooped, picked up the packet of letters and thrust them into her bosom beside the precious paper which von Ladenburg had intrusted to her care; but so quickly was it done that she was again facing Madison when he turned for her to assist him with his cloak.

It was perfectly evident that it was dangerous to the successful accomplishment of Norroy's plan for him to remain longer in his place of vantage. He crept softly to the door, pushed it open, and without troubling to close it again, made his way to the stairs and up them, tiptoeing with the greatest of care and causing not a single creak.

He regained the boudoir in safety and sat down, his wits together, calm and collected,

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as was necessary when he reflected that fate had not only given the enemy into his hands, but made justifiable means which would otherwise have appeared dishonorable. It was only with an effort that he could contain himself when he realized how much hung on the next move in the game.

He heard the door close behind Madison, and a whispered good-night; then the rustling of the skirts, and her little hands were in his as she greeted him again.

"I told you I would come to-night," he said. "You remember—in the park?"

"I remember," she answered; "but I feared you would forget."

"Are you glad, then, that I came?" His tones were almost tender.

There was no doubt of the fact that she was, from the manner in which she affirmed. She led him out of the boudoir and down to the drawing-room. For once this woman's heart had been touched; not seriously, perhaps, but enough to make her realize that she was a woman in the presence of a man;

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not a tool hired by the government to make fools of the other sex.

"You come most opportunely, Herr von Wolfgang," she said. "As perhaps the Count von Ladenburg has told you, I leave Bogota to-morrow and go back to our beloved capitol."

"Yes, I know," he answered. "And that is why I came to-night. I have been foolish. Fearing that you might discover my identity, I have remained away from you, when I would have almost given up my whole career to have been with you. Bertha—you see I know you"—he was speaking in German now—"this career is not fit for a woman. You should leave it. For a man it is otherwise."

"I know," she answered, with downcast eyes. "But a woman must live. By her wits, if need be. When she has no one to care for her, she sometimes does things she does not care to do. I have no one to care what I do."

"No one to care!" he echoed, in tones deep

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with emotion. "You call me no one, then?"

"I am sorry," she said, her eyes still seeking the floor. "But it may be I misinterpreted."

"If you do not know that I have decided to try to be near you always, you misinterpret," he said, bluntly.

"Can it be?" she murmured, looking at him from under her long lashes. "Can it be?"

"Can it be that I want to be near you? Haven't you seen that I have tried to avoid you because I feared you would come between me and my work? I have always been afraid of falling in love. I know my nature too well. I knew that when it came, I would cast all else aside."

"But you have not fallen in love?" she questioned, her heart beating rapidly.

"So much in love that when you leave here to-morrow I shall be desolate. All my enthusiasm for my work has faded, now I know it will keep me from you." As before stated, Yorke Norroy had made a name

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for himself as an amateur actor. He was putting all of his art into this, and his tones rang true and were full of manly ardor.

She looked at him, not daring to trust herself to speak. Down in her heart the dormant feminine was aroused. The man truly loved her! She looked at his face, lighted up with enthusiasm. Meanwhile his active brain was wondering whether he convinced. The knowledge of what she had done to young Madison spurred him on.

"You say you go to-morrow. Then I say, before you go, I want you to marry me. I cannot let you go without knowing that you are mine. My work I am bound in honor to do, but I cannot lose my only chance of happiness because of it—"

"You love me?" she murmured, softly.
"You love me?"

"Yes, I love you." He had taken her into his arms. The sight of her pretty face upturned turned him cold and bitter when he reflected that had she her own way she would have dishonored a youngster whose only

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fault was his loving her. "Yes, I love you." The tones were as cold as steel; his hand was plunged into her bodice, and he sprang back, the treaty and the papers in his hand. "As you loved Hartley Madison," he said, slowly. "For *these*." He held the papers aloft for a moment, then slipped them into the inner pocket of his coat.

For a moment the woman was dazed. The whole thing had happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, so contrary to all rules, that she could hardly believe what she heard. Surely this was some horrible phantasm, some unbelievable hallucination.

"I was behind those curtains," he said, pointing, "when you stole the papers from young Madison. And so Bertha Freyhold has let a man make a fool of her after all her triumphs!" There was the faintest suspicion of a sneer in his tone.

She had recovered herself now. It was real.

"I knew you from the first, Bertha," went on Norroy, kindly. "You favored me, but

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I did not think it would come to this. One never can tell."

She made a dart toward him. "Who are you?" she cried. "You are Saxonian. Why should you seek to make known our country's plans?"

"Because I am not Saxonian, Bertha," answered the secret agent. "I am the agent of another country, of which you may have heard—the United States." He bowed.

"You devil!" she cried, lashing herself into a white heat of fury. "You devil!"

The sound of horse's hoofs coming rapidly up the graveled walk broke the momentary stillness, and the whistle of von Ladenburg came to their ears. With the liveness of a tigress, she sprang across the room and toward the window opening to the front.

"Stop!" commanded Norroy. She turned and faced the black muzzle of a revolver. "Don't move and don't make a noise."

"Shoot!" she said, defiantly. "Shoot!" In an instant she had thrown open the window. "Help, Herman, help!" she shouted,

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in accents so real that they needed no addition. "Your revolver! Help! Treachery!"

Norroy's finger trembled on the trigger, but his heart failed him. He turned and made for the rear window, but before he had reached it she hurled herself upon him with such force that the revolver dropped from his hand to the floor. Her clawing fingers tore at his coat. By sheer strength he cast her off and threw open the window but she had regained her hold in a moment. He might have struck her had he chosen, but his ethics forbade him to bodily harm a woman. He grasped the window ledge and again almost tore off her grasp. At the same moment, von Ladenburg, revolver in hand, rushed into the room.

"Shoot! Shoot!" she cried, as she felt Norroy slipping from her. "He is an American spy! He has the treaty! Shoot!"

Before the words were half spoken Norroy leaped from the window, and almost instantly the sharp crack of a revolver and

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the piercing scream of a woman rang out together.

"My God! You've shot *me!*" came the words. Norroy's fingers still gripped the outside of the window. At the woman's shriek, he threw himself inward headlong, and into the arms of von Ladenburg. They grappled, man to man, Norroy's right hand catching the revolver and holding it high; slowly his other arm crept around the German's neck and his left foot caught von Ladenburg's behind the instep. With a crash the German diplomat went down, Norroy on top of him; and the revolver was in the possession of the American. Quickly he arose and stood over his prostrate foe.

There was a battering on the door and the two soldiers rushed in, with their carbines upraised. At the sight of the gaunt figure holding a revolver in each hand—for at the sound of their coming Norroy had recovered his own—they stood back.

"Put down those weapons," snapped out Norroy in Spanish. "Quickly now, you

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swine. Go into that room."

Without a word, they went into a little apartment opening at the opposite end of the one in which the drama had taken place, leaving their carbines behind. The key was in the lock, and Norroy turned it. The German, slowly recovering from the shock of his fall, looked up.

"Bertha!" he moaned.

"Lie still," commanded Norroy. He moved to the apparently lifeless body of the woman by the window, and examined her. Then he laughed.

"The bullet grazed her arm," he said, lightly. "The girl's not hurt. She has fainted. A little cold water will revive her." Still keeping an eye on his enemy, he moved to the locked door and opened it.

"Come out," he said to the soldiers. They re-entered. "Take the cord from that picture and tie this *caballero* tightly. Don't move, von Ladenburg."

The soldiers obeyed his orders, and Ladenburg, conscious of the futility of resist-

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ance, allowed himself to be trussed up. Then Norroy compelled the first soldier to tie the second, and personally attended to the tying up of the former himself. Quickly he bundled all three into the inner room, and stood in the doorway.

"Tell me," entreated von Ladenburg, keeping down his rage and disappointment as best he could, "what do you hope to gain by this?"

"A clear start to the coast before Fraulein Bertha recovers," replied the victor.

Von Ladenburg's language was that of a man disappointed in the dearest hope of his life. Norroy listened amusedly.

"You—you cursed traitor!"

"No traitor," answered Norroy, lightly. "Only a secret agent, a trifle cleverer than you, Ladenburg, and in the service of the United States."

He closed the door to prevent hearing any more torrid language—Yorke Norroy disliked profanity—then picked up the senseless body of the woman, placed it on the di-

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van, and covered it over with a portiere which he pulled down.

An hour later Hartley Madison had been routed out of bed, and Norroy had told him as much of the story as he deemed necessary. Their luggage was hastily packed, and consigned to the next mule train. Outside stood two horses, saddled and waiting their pleasure, and before the clock struck nine, the two horsemen might have been seen riding rapidly up the goat path which leads over the mountains and to the coast.

CHAPTER VI.

SAXONIA DOES NOT BUILD THE CANAL.

In the private library of the President, the secretary of state was again conferring with his chief. There, too, sat Yorke Norroy, immaculate as ever in evening dress, and tatooing gently on the table with manicured fingers.

He had arrived in Washington just three hours before, and had not had time to eat his dinner. As it was nearing eight o'clock, and lunch had been served at twelve on the train, he was beginning to experience the pangs of hunger, and wished that the two dignitaries would dispense with his valuable services for the nonce.

"As you know, Norroy," said the secretary, "your cablegram from Buenaventura put the wheels in motion. The revolutionists were still urgent, and the would-be canal builders more so. So we thought it well to

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encourage the idea that it would do no harm to be ready. We knew that you would not cable as you did without cause."

"Thank you," put in Norroy. He extracted a cigarette from a box on the table and lit it. His face was a picture of boredom.

"So I understand that, acting on our hint, they have made ready, and are awaiting the word to free themselves," went on the secretary.

He turned to Norroy, whose look changed to one of polite interest.

"And now that we have seen this," broke in the Chief Executive, glowering at the document which von Ladenburg had been to so much trouble to procure—"now that we have seen this, it occurs to both the secretary and myself that to waste more time in diplomatic relations with a country so absolutely unscrupulous as Colombia is hardly fair to the commercial interests, not only of the United States, but of the world."

"So the word to begin the little affair in

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Panama has been given?" queried Norroy, flicking away the ashes from the bosom of his spotless shirt.

"Yes," answered the President. "We are awaiting the answer now."

In the telegraph room in the west wing of the White House an operator was busily taking down on his typewriter various things of interest to the world at large. He had just finished a telegram from San Francisco regarding smuggling, when the cable ticker began indications of having a story to tell.

He tapped back that he was ready, and the message came: "Colon, Republic of Panama——" "Great guns! that's a new one on me." He adjusted the transmitter and queried the date mark. It was repeated, with advice from the Key West operator to wait until he heard the rest before putting queries indicating ignorance.

When the message was completed the operator, hardly able to credit it, asked to have it repeated. But repetition was only

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confirmation. Then the operator realized that he was in possession of the first message from a new country. Quickly he aroused the messenger and sent him flying.

When the envelope had been torn open, the President read its contents to his two auditors:

Organized movement began to-night. Colon guard utterly routed by revolutionists. Colon in their hands. Flag of republic formally raised.

To this and more following was signed the name of a reckless adventurer who had been drilling prospective insurgents for some months at the request of a certain gentleman of New York interested in the canal.

The secretary looked at the yellow slip solemnly. "There is no danger of Saxonia building the canal now."

"No," said Norroy, depositing his burnt-out cigarette in the tray. "But there is danger of my starving in a few moments. Good-night, Mr. President. Good-night, Mr. Secretary. I am going to the New Willard and eat down the bill of fare." The secret door closed behind him.

A Tilt With The Muscovite

CHAPTER 1.

THE LETTER FROM PARIS.

No matter where Yorke Norroy might go, the messages sent by the secretary of state always followed him. They were commonplace enough in wording, were signed simply with an initial, and were sent through the usual channels of the Western Union office. The boy assigned with the delivering of this particular message had followed Norroy from the Metropolitan Club to the secret agent's apartment on Connecticut Avenue, and from there had perforce to transport his small person to the golf links at Chevy Chase.

Norroy never lost time in answering these summons, and that was his excuse for ap-

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pearing in golf tweeds and tan shoes, with long loose coat and slouched hat. He removed the latter two articles of attire on entering the secretary's residence, and when shown into the private library, lighted one of his ever-present cigarettes with the gold crest and waited the new detail. He was quite ready for it, as two months spent in enforced idleness was quite enough for him at one time.

They shook hands on the secretary's entrance, but the head of the Department of State made no comment further than to request that Norroy read a letter, written in French, which he put into his hand.

"It's rather badly put together. Writer isn't a Frenchman," observed Norroy, when he had glanced over it.

"Translate it aloud," directed the secretary. "I have the gist of it, but I imagine your French is better than mine."

To the Chief of the Foreign Office,

Washington, United States of America.

Sir: If you would know what has become of M. Leo Gaylord, about whom your newspapers said so much two years ago, you can discover what you wish to know

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by sending someone to Paris, and have him write to M. Anton Dumercier, 16 Faubourg St. Gregoire. I cannot tell more by mail, as I am not authorized to do so. This is a most serious thing for Mr. Gaylord, as he is being held a prisoner by an European power for certain reasons unnecessary to explain to you.

When you receive this, please telegraph me immediately when your agent will be in Paris. With much respect,

Your obedient servant,

Paris, November 6th.

A. D.

"Translated out of idiomatic French into idiomatic English, that is about the size of the letter," remarked Norroy, as he returned the paper to the secretary.

"So I thought." The secretary took from the pocket of his coat a number of newspaper clippings. "You had better read these at some time. They will be useful to you."

"I am to go to Paris, then?" questioned the secret agent.

The secretary nodded. "You know about this man Gaylord, of course. Everyone does, thanks to the press. But there are two things that for two years you have not known, along with the general public. The first is: To where did he disappear——"

Norroy flicked some ashes from his ciga-

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rette. "Pardon me if I suggest that you also are in the dark concerning that, Mr. Secretary."

"That I grant you. I am. But on the second point I am fully informed. You are well aware of Gaylord's ability as an inventor, and of the many astoundingly clever devices he placed on the market, making a fortune for himself out of them. Now, for four years before his disappearance he had been at work on a gun—a rapid-firing gun—of tremendous power, which would carry the almost unbelievable distance of twenty-five miles—fired from a ship."

Norroy seemed on the point of whistling, so great was his surprise. He did not, however, but his slender fingers beat a rapid tattoo on the table.

"You can readily understand what such an invention would mean to naval warfare. Twenty-five miles! It would render practically useless the navies of other nations—"

"But was it practicable?" inquired Norroy.

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“That we do not know. Gaylord went away from the United States to work on it—received a concession from the secretary of war to utilize one of the islands in the Samoan group for the purpose of testing his invention. He refused any assistance in the way of skilled helpers, and went there to work by himself. Two years ago he appeared in Tutuila and wired the secretary of war a message to this effect: ‘Have completed model, tested it, found it practicable, destroyed it. Proceeding to United States via Europe. Need rest. Will confer with you in Washington three months’ time, probably utilizing naval gun factory purposes of building.’” The secretary had been reading the quotation from a notebook in his hand. He closed the book and replaced it in his pocket.

“That sounds as though he had succeeded,” remarked Yorke Norroy.

“We heard from him again from Hongkong, from Cairo and from Vienna. His next place to stop at was St. Petersburg. He

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is supposed to have never arrived there. The clippings and the detectives' reports will tell you all you may not know, but which has been brought to light. Perhaps Anton Dumercier may be able to supply the missing links."

Norroy rose and the secretary also. "Remember, Norroy, the importance of this affair is without parallel. I do not think we have ever had any case on our hands which caused as many sleepless nights as has Leo Gaylord's. Imagine a gun that would destroy at twenty-five miles in the possession of any European power! It would mean the supremacy of the sea—the absolute supremacy. And what would be the result?"

There was no need for either man to answer the question. Both understood perfectly what the mission meant.

"I shall go to New York to-night and take the *Lucania* to-morrow. You will hear from me in six days from Paris."

"And remember," were the secretary's parting words, "spare no expense and no ef-

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fort to glean every atom of the truth from Dumercier—or whoever wrote that letter.”

The hard lines around Norroy’s mouth were excellent reasons to believe that no such instructions were needed to exert him to his utmost in this case.

The large, fair-haired man with the military carriage hesitated at the entrance of the cafe of the Hotel Continental, and his eyes roamed about the low-ceilinged room as though he were in search of some one. Presently the vision of an elaborately attired *boulevardier* in frock coat and tall hat was mirrored in his orbs to the exclusion of the other patrons of the cafe. For the letter had said that the representative of the United States would wear a yellow chrysanthemum as a boutonniere. Such lapel decorations being rare in Paris, M. Dumercier hesitated no more.

He approached the table and stood before it, regarding the man with the chrysanthemum and the rimless monocle.

“*Comment vous portez-vous, m’sieur?*”

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he inquired, with respect.

"*Tres bien, merci, m'sieur,*" was the calm reply.

"*C'est M'sieur Lemaire?*" asked the fair-haired man, tentatively.

"*Oui, m'sieur,*" replied the monocled one, with brevity.

It was sufficient introduction, and the two men studied each other over the foaming bocks which the *garcon* brought at the command of the one addressed as Lemaire. The conversation was mainly on the weather and the recent turmoils in the Senate. By Dumercier's speech it was easily told he was not a Parisian—the average listener would have decided he was from one of the lost provinces. Lemaire, too, had a slight accent which proved him not of the Boulevards, but which might easily obtain with a native of Languedoc or perhaps Gascony.

They did not linger long in the cafe, but adjourned to Lemaire's apartments on the second floor of the hotel. No words were wasted between the two on the way. Le-

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maire threw open the door of his private reception room and bade Dumercier enter. The door was locked and both men went into the bedroom adjoining, Lemaire closing the second door as they passed in.

From his pocket Lemaire drew a letter which he handed to his companion.

"You wrote this?" he inquired.

The other replied in the affirmative.

"Well?" It was easily seen from Lemaire's manner that he expected to share little in the conversation and that he did not intend to draw it out to the extent of a personal chat.

"I am a Pole, M. Lemaire," began the other, apologetically almost, "and I was an officer in his imperial Russian majesty's army. I am not now. I was lucky to escape unharmed. That is all regarding myself that I need say, is it not?"

"Unless it concerns M. Gaylord—yes."

"Well, M. Gaylord is in a Russian prison. He has been there for two years. That was news to you until my letter came, was it not,

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m'sieur?"

The other nodded.

"I was a sergeant in the Paulowskis when he came. Afterward I became an officer—but no matter. How I came to discover what I know is also no matter. Briefly, I will tell you. M. Gaylord was arrested near Moscow, and he is now a prisoner but a few versts from that city—in the fort of St. Basil.

"They did not intend to keep M. Gaylord prisoner long. They thought to find on his person some sketch or plan which would tell them about the new cannon which he had invented. But there were no papers of any kind on him or in his bags and boxes. Therefore, he was taken to St. Basil.

"He might have been free the next day after his capture if he had given up his ideas to M. Mobrikoff. But he would not. M. Mobrikoff is chief of the Bureau of Engineers and Ordnance. It was he who knew that M. Gaylord had completed his new gun which he would make for the United States.

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"When M. Gaylord refused to tell him how it was done, he told M. Gaylord that he should remain prisoner until he did so. A prisoner, then, he has been for two years, but nothing would he say.

"Three months ago, M. Mobrikoff, who is also a colonel and a noble of Russia—a count—made up his mind that M. Gaylord *should* tell what he knew. So M. Gaylord was ordered to be knouted if he would not tell."

The teeth of his listener came together with a savage snap, and he crumpled the letter in his hand into a shapeless mass. The man who called himself Dumercier looked up quickly. His auditor had begun to straighten out the paper and was now tearing it slowly to pieces.

"Proceed," he commanded.

"So M. Gaylord was knouted. You know the knout, m'sieur? It is long and has brass ends to it. With this M. Gaylord was scourged—fifty strokes he received.

"But he would not tell what they wished

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to know. The count then said that each week would the knout be given him. But he would not answer. He only closed his mouth as you did but a moment ago; closed his mouth and ground one tooth against another. And what he said was in your English tongue. The language I do not know, but so many times has M. Gaylord said this that I have learned it, too. 'Gotter 'ell!' he said—only that, no more—'Gotter 'ell!'

"Now, as for me, I was foolish. I was an officer. I was a noble, too, then, for one may not be an officer without he be noble. But Poland—they wish to be free there. And I—but that is concerning myself, m'sieur. It only serves for you to know that I determined to leave Russia before it was so arranged that I might never leave it.

"M. Gaylord I liked. I went to him. I told him that I was coming out of Russia. So then he told me this. I dared not write it down, for I knew I might be searched, but this I learned from him and repeated it again and again:

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“ ‘I have been beaten like a dog and caged like a criminal. I love my country, but if my country cannot aid me, or will not, I must aid myself. As yet Russia knows nothing of my new weapon. Three months from to-day, if I am not free, she will know all.’ ”

The paper in the hands of the other had been reduced to the tiniest fragments. He looked up.

“That was all?” he inquired.

“All except that if I succeeded in carrying the message the person to whom I gave it should pay me ten thousand rubles, and collect the same from his brother, Douglas Gaylord, of Birmingham, Alabama. If he were freed, ten thousand more he would himself pay me.”

“This man Mobrikoff—what of him?”

“I have told you. He is a noble and a colonel in the army. He is also the chief of the engineers and of the ordnance. He has Romanoff blood.”

They talked more. The monocled one

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asked many questions—searching questions which went into the history of Mobrikoff's past career and all those connected with him; his likes and his dislikes; his habits and his manners.

There was a satisfied gleam on the questioner's face when the information was elicited that Mobrikoff's failings lay in the direction of women.

"Ah, yes!" the Pole said. "The *chan-teuses* of the Palermo. They indeed are the favorites of M. Mobrikoff. To one he threw a thousand-ruble note. I was there, m'sieur, for a girl from my village danced. Afterward she told me. It is that, m'sieur. Stage women—I know not why—he seeks his feminine society among them——"

He was cut short by the other rising.

"There is a note for five hundred francs, M. Dumercier," he said, curtly. "I will see more of you again. I will write you. Meanwhile I must think——"

"But the ten thousand?"

"All in good time. I must see for my-

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self. I go to Moscow to-night. But have no fear. It is but a trip of inspection. I will return before the week is out. *Au revoir, m'sieur.*"

He saw him to the door, and then sat down in the reception room. For some minutes he sat perfectly still. Then he lighted a cigarette, and after that many more, his slender fingers meanwhile drumming a devil's tattoo on the arm of the chair in which he sat.

That evening the six o'clock express for the north bore the person of M. Lemaire, described in his passport as a French-American; occupation, the management of theaters; residence, New York City, and object in visiting Moscow, business connected with the theaters. The passport was signed by the minister of the United States to France.

In Moscow M. Lemaire remained several days. He exhibited a tourist's curiosity with regard to the old city. M. Mikhaelovitch, the manager of the *cafe chantant*—the Palermo—gratified this curiosity per-

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sonally. In his company M. Lemaire visited the Kremlin, the Cathedral of Ostankino, the Church of the Nativity, and that weird architectural monstrosity, the Church of St. Basil the Beatified, with its forest of bell towers, ornamented with heraldic designs, pots of flowers and many grotesque figures.

Naturally, from the Church of St. Basil, it was not strange that the mind wandered to the prison of the same saint. So thither they went, too. M. Lemaire seemed to take but little interest in the grim criminal institution, so they remained but a short while.

When M. Lemaire left Moscow and M. Mikhaelovitch, he promised the proprietor that his *chanteuses* would arrive within several weeks. Whereupon M. Mikhaelovitch smiled in a gratified manner, soon afterward conferring with the disreputable journalist who aided him in his work, when he was not overfull of vodka. The disreputable journalist wrote a sonnet which exalted the beauty and ravishing charms of certain English and American singers who would

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delight the inhabitants of the Kitai-Gorod with ballads sung in M. Mikhaelovitch's charming resort, the Palermo. This sonnet was published in the newspapers of Moscow and was read by noblemen and officers of the navy and marine who sojourned within the Kitai-Gorod. These exalted personages were frequenters of M. Mikhaelovitch's *café chantant*. Consequently they were interested.

Meanwhile two cablegrams had been despatched by M. Lemaire as soon as the train left the realm of the Great White Czar. Both were in code, and the German telegrapher who handled them scowled, for such messages were not liked in his Teutonic majesty's realm. But they were despatched nevertheless.

One was to the secretary of state, and requested that Miss Adelaide Hardesty be ordered to Paris immediately to join Theophile Lemaire at the Hotel Continental. The other was to Miss Hardesty herself and is perhaps worth quoting:

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Secretary wired to-day request for your assistance. Select three prettiest show girls in Manhattan. Bring them with you. Consult secretary regarding reasons.

Thus Edna Follis, Mabel Dupree and Nanette Edmonds forsook the Rialto and journeyed with Miss Adelaide Hardesty to Paris.

A letter fully explaining the reasons for the two cablegrams reached the secretary of state by the *Campania*. It bore the postmark of Paris. In part it read:

The man who gives the information is a Polish nihilist, formerly an officer in the Russian army. If we were to take the matter up legally with Russia, his oath would not be worth the word of a Chinese diplomat. He is discredited and disgraced, and acknowledges the fact himself. To make a serious charge against another power on the strength of such a man's statement would be impossible and absurd. It would be denied, and if things came to the worst Gaylord would probably be sacrificed and his body put into some vault of the fort. My plan seems to be the only feasible one. If it fails, be assured that I am quite aware of the fact that I can expect no assistance from the United States—officially.

This screed was signed with the initials of Yorke Norroy.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL FROM BROADWAY.

For two weeks, the American *chanteuses* had sung and danced before the critical audience which nightly gathered in the *cafe chantant* of M. Mikhaelovitch. Incidentally, their twinkling feet, coquettish gestures, trim forms and speaking orbs had caused the Odessa Jewesses and Georgian beauties, hitherto such favorites, to fill the position commonly denominated as "facing the wall." Even Yvette d'Alencon, Parisian and consequently charming, was not acclaimed as of yore. The American beauties had caused her star to wane and become dim.

The Americans brought rag-time with them. Moscow had heard rag-time before, but not sung as the Rialto girls sang it, nor accompanied with the complement of "goo-goo" eyes and buck and wing dances.

The receipts of M. Mikhaelovitch in-

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creased, and he one day, in an excess of jubilation, embraced M. Lemaire and kissed him affectionately on both cheeks; which was Russian sentiment and meant that he cherished M. Lemaire as a brother. M. Lemaire, being French, should have appreciated this, but evidently his residence in America had deprived him of the mental light which approved of osculation between those of the same sex. As it was, M. Mikhaelovitch narrowly missed being stunned into unconsciousness by a blow from M. Lemaire's fist. M. Lemaire, however, remembered his part and restrained himself.

Back in the dressing-rooms, the girls chatted among themselves.

"Talk about your New York Johnnies," sniffed Mabel Dupree. "Why, they're not in it for a minute with these fly Russian guys. Say, Edie, you remember that chap that sat in that second walled-off pen last night and threw me a pearl bracelet, eh? Well, he's here again to-night. I just peeped out behind the curtain and saw him."

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Edna Follis adjusted her pompon. "You'd better leave the new ones alone and stick to the old," she said, warningly. "That Captain Wishtoff—"

"Wesshoff," corrected Mabel, indignantly.

"Well, anyhow, he's a good fellow. You won't find many will hand you out a diamond brooch like the one he gave you. He'll be angrier than the seven Satans if you throw any eyes at this other fellow. I know——"

"Victor?" suggested Mabel, pleasantly.

"Shut up! You don't know anything about Victor. Why don't you try to act as though you had some sense? Act like Adelaide. Adelaide hasn't mixed up with any smelling Russkis."

The third girl, who had been silent, now spoke. "Adelaide is a fool," she commented. "There's that fellow who comes here every night. Sends her candy and flowers and—everything. I know who he is. Lieutenant Ogareff told me. He's Count Mobri-koff, and he's related somehow to the czar's

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family. And Adelaide won't pay any attention to him."

"I believe Adelaide has a mash on Lemaire, and hasn't got any time for anybody else. Can't say I like him much. Do you?" observed Miss Follis.

"No, I don't. He's altogether too fond of browbeating people. Say, do you know I have my doubts about him being French? I heard him talking to Adelaide day before yesterday in the corridor, and he spoke as good English as you or I."

There was a rap on the door and the call for Miss Follis was made. Whereupon Miss Follis donned her light top-coat over her red skirts, and, taking her beribboned cane, departed to delight the souls of the children of the czar with the amatory strains of "I've Got a Feelin' for You."

There was no dearth of auditors for Miss Follis' coon song. The brass-railinged tiers of the pit had their tables crowded with men in the various uniforms of the army of the czar; the blue-black of the marine, the sky-

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blue of the infantry, the red of the telegraph, the orange of the light cavalry—all were represented there. The sight catching the singer's eye from the stage was reminiscent of a rainbow. The electric lights shone on patent leather boots, gold braiding, silver spurs and jingling swords. The spectators themselves were mostly of the same class—army officers, naval officers, employees of the government in some shape and form, all wearing uniforms, and all ready to cast upon the stage money extorted from the government, as evidence of their pleasure in the antics of those who appeared before them.

But there was one man in all this crowd who was immediately brought to the attention of any who entered. He sat on a raised platform, almost on a level with the stage, and it was known that this platform was one which was occupied by none save those of high rank. The man who occupied this place was attired in the uniform of colonel of engineers, and he wore on his breast the Order of St. Nicholas. He was a well-known

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patron of the Palermo, this nobleman—the Count Mobrikoff.

To Miss Follis, Mobrikoff paid little heed, only frowning when she was recalled for the fourth time to sing over the ballad regarding the “sneaking feeling.” Miss Dupree, who followed her, likewise gave him no pleasure, to judge from the scowl with which he favored the inoffensive waiter on ordering his second bottle of Paul Roget. After Miss Dupree came Mlle. Yvette d’Alencon, who was received coldly and encored but once, and that only by a few of the faithful.

The entrance of the next *chanteuse* was preceded by loud applause and clapping of hands, for Miss Adelaide Moray, as the bills styled her, had made more than an ordinary hit with the patrons of the *café chantant*. At her appearance Mobrikoff leaned forward and watched closely, with the light of admiration in his eye. At the conclusion of her song he joined in the applause and tossed a tiny box upon the stage. Adelaide

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stooped down and secured it.

She was forced to repeat her song several times, but after the ordeal had been gone through with she made her way hastily to her dressing-room and opened the box. It contained a heart-shaped pin set with diamonds and rubies, around which was wrapped a note in French. A few moments later M. Lemaire and she were conversing over the note.

"H'm, h'm!" Lemaire was reading it. " 'Scorned my advances, refused my gifts, beg interview'—h'm, h'm—'wear the pin as token of acceptance.' " He looked up and, speaking in English, said: "Johnnies are the same the world over, aren't they, Adelaide?"

She nodded. "Shall I accept? It seems to me I've held him off enough already."

He meditated. "You have the necessary liquors in your reception room to satisfy his lordship?"

"Considering that you sent them there, you should know. I haven't touched any of

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them. You know how I despise intoxicants."

"And you have—the other?"

She eyed him scornfully. "Kindly give me credit for having some foresightedness."

He examined his watch. Then he looked at her thoughtfully. "Do you know, Adelaide, you're rather a stunning-looking girl?" he said.

If healthy, rounded form, milk-white skin with the faintest ruddy tinge, and deep black eyes constitute "stunningness," then M. Lemaire was correct. Adelaide Hardesty—or Moray—was the type of a woman who appeals to the mind looking for outward charm. The finer workings of her mind were not apparent to many, for she chose not to reveal them, passing rather as a woman whose sole desire in life was to cling to the wheel of pleasure as long as life held forth within.

She looked out at Lemaire from under her long lashes. "That is part of the game,"

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she returned, without the faintest show of emotion of any kind. "I suppose your examination of your watch is a question which I am to answer. I think if you enter my reception room at the hotel at twelve o'clock you will find the gentleman in a condition fit for our ends."

As he smiled and patted her shoulder paternally, her smile was very bitter. When he had gone, after giving a few further instructions, she became pensive. "A good tool for his ends, that is all," she told herself. The bitterness was gone, there was only sadness in the whisper.

When she went on for her second turn, she wore the pin which M. Mobrikoff had thrown to her. The eyes of the Russian nobleman lighted up, and he ordered more champagne. She watched him as she sang and threw him several looks which she strove to make unstudied.

At eleven o'clock the droshky of Count Mobrikoff was at the narrow door out of which the performers passed from the stage,

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while within the outer room the owner of the droshky sat, rubbing his booted legs together, toying with his sword, and watching the door to Miss Hardesty's dressing-room with ill-concealed anticipation.

When she emerged, clad in sealskins, her masses of heavy hair adorned with a toque of the same material, he sprang to his feet. Her dark eyes fell upon him rather shyly.

"I am your slave, mademoiselle," he said, in French, and with the customary extravagance of the Russian. He took one of her little gloved hands and pressed it to his lips.

"Almost every night for two weeks past I have watched you. I had thought that you were cold to me, and that you preferred another—"

"*Merci, m'sieur,*" she returned. "But I must hurry on now. Some other time, perhaps—"

"What! will you leave me so soon, now that I have found you? Ah, no, mademoiselle—ah, no! You must come with me to the Ulamen. There we will have a little sup-

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per and some wine—and I will feast my eyes upon you.”

She blushed. The blush was real. Adelaide Hardesty had not yet hardened herself to playing the part which her chief had assigned her. The scraping Russian disgusted her. She knew what lay behind this flattery. She knew of the knouting of Gaylord and of other things. At the thought of the last, she braved herself to the ordeal.

“If you insist, m’sieur,” she said, smiling faintly, “I will allow you to go with me to my hotel.”

“Ah, yes! You have lifted me out of Hades into Heaven. My droshky awaits without.”

He took her arm, and she allowed him to help her into the vehicle. A word to his driver, and they were whirling across the snow in the direction of the Hotel d’Angleterre, where Adelaide Hardesty maintained a suite of rooms. She strove to make it appear to the Russian that she was interested in him, and, thanks to his egotism, her rather

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studied attempts passed for realities. And now the hotel loomed up before them. He stepped to the ground and helped her to alight.

"And now, *M. le Comte*," she said, as she released his hand, "I will say good night and thank you."

"You will leave me now? Ah, no! Let us go within this hotel of yours. Let us have the supper of which I spoke——"

He talked on more in the same strain, and presently she assented reluctantly.

"I have a reception room, *M. le Comte*," she told him. "In that you may stay for a while if you wish. I do not care for the public dining room, nor do I care for food."

Mobrikoff, delighted at his supposed victory, followed her, and after the servant had gone ahead to light the rooms, she motioned him to the elevator, which raised them to the third floor. Down the uncarpeted hall she led him to where the attendant stood, holding the door of her apartments open. The count bowed for her to pass in, and

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when she had done so followed her.

He did not waste time. The man was plainly attracted by the girl, and he brought all his previous knowledge of women to bear upon her. But he would have failed even had she not known of him what she did, for Adelaide Hardesty had her own ideas of mankind, and the use of flattery did not come in as part of the character of her ideal man. But she had been an actress too long to fail in any part once she entered into the spirit of it.

She had placed various liqueurs on the table soon after her entrance, and he had done full justice to all of them. She had waited to see him a trifle influenced by the intoxicants before bringing out the *chef-d'oeuvre*.

"You have heard of the American drink—the cocktail?" she asked, her deep eyes turned full upon him and her red lips curving in a smile which she intended to appear tender. "That is the drink which surpasses them all."

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"Of that I have heard," he responded. "And I will never rest until I have drunk it, for is it not the national drink of Mlle. Adelaide's own land?"

She smiled at his lofty words, a natural smile this, for, now that she had hardened herself to what she was about to do, the Russian's extravagance was humorous to her American mind. "You need not wait long for the cocktail, *M. le Comte*," she said. "I myself will make one for you."

He was almost maudlin now and murmured something about Hebe and the nectar of Olympus. She took the vermouth, the whisky, the bitters and the lemon, making the drinks on a little tabouret with her back turned to him. Then she placed the ice within the frail-stemmed glasses and poured in the decoction. In one of them she dropped something which she had been holding in the palm of her hand, and quickly broke the tiny tablet to pieces with the spoon, stirring it vigorously. Then she placed both glasses on a tiny tray, with the one over which she

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had expended so much trouble on the Russian's side.

"Will you drink?" she asked, gayly.

He reached out his hand and took the glass. She raised hers and they clinked them together.

"To mademoiselle's eyes!" he cried.

He drank it down with every appearance of enjoyment and then threw the glass over his shoulder. It alighted on the hearth and broke into tiny fragments. "A fitting end for a glass which has served its purpose," she thought.

And now came the hardest part of all, for the drink mounting to the Russian's head aroused all his hitherto suppressed boldness, and in the manner of his race he made love to the American girl. At first a mere pressing of the hand to his lips, with the accompanying declarations of affection. She had purposely seated herself upon a tiny chair in order that he might not come nearer.

He was determined that he would take the girl into his arms. His feet were un-

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steady now and his head whirled. Out of the mist that enveloped him, he could see only her eyes shining in the light of the shaded lamp. He rose to his feet, trying to fight down his weakness.

"I love you," he muttered. "I love you."

He moved forward, still holding her hand. She rose. The latent beast in his eyes terrified her. He stretched out his arms as though to envelop her within them. But at that moment a great desire for rest overmastered him. He forgot the shining eyes.

"I—I——" he began. Then his legs became weak at the knee, and he toppled forward, gripping the table. But his muscles were inert, and his head slipped along the polished surface, and, with a crash of bottles and glasses, the form of the chief of engineers flattened itself on the floor.

She stood erect, pale and afraid. Then her eyes turned to the senseless body of the man. There was no sound in the room save his heavy breathing.

She looked at her watch. It was rapidly

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nearing the hour of twelve. She sat down, supporting her head with her hands, among the broken remains of bottles and glassware, the trickling liqueurs dripping on her gown. She knew it, but she hardly cared.

Out of the distance the toll of the second Tsar Kolokol, the great bell of the Kremlin, rumbled out the strokes of midnight. Then came a gentle knock on the door. She arose and admitted Lemaire.

"Successful, of course?"

"Of course," she responded, wearily.
"He lies there."

"Then I must ask you to go into your room, Adelaide," said Lemaire. The girl obeyed him, leaving him alone with the man. Lemaire lifted the frame of the senseless Russian in his arms and deposited him on the divan.

"It is lucky for me that I am the average height of a man," soliloquized Lemaire.
"Quite lucky, indeed."

It was but a matter of a few moments before the gorgeous uniform had been stripped

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from the person of M. Mobrikoff. His despoiler opened a bag which he carried, and which contained a suit of coarse brown serge. In this he arrayed the drugged officer, gathering up Mobrikoff's uniform and placing it in the bag from which he had taken the brown clothes.

"Now, Adelaide," he called.

The girl re-entered. "Where is that long wardrobe trunk of yours?" he inquired.

The girl threw back the hangings at the end of the room and disclosed one of those monstrosities which are the trial of the baggage-smasher—a theatrical wardrobe trunk and property box. In length it approximated six feet and in height about three. She unlocked it. It was empty.

"The drug will hold good for about six hours. During that time he will be safe, but after that—— We had better bind him now, Adelaide."

He took some stout manila rope from the same bag he had before utilized, and the feet and hands of Count Mobrikoff were securely

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bound. A gag was placed in the Russian's mouth and bound tightly about his head. Lemaire picked up the trussed body and placed it within the trunk.

"You have bored the air holes?" he inquired.

"There are four on each side and ten in the top. He isn't in any danger of asphyxiation," was her reply.

Lemaire straightened out the knees of the captive.

"All that is necessary now is to throw in enough clothes to keep him from bumping from side to side," he said. "I should advise you to lock the trunk to-night, for he will be sensible in the morning."

Then he turned to go, but she caught him by the arm.

"Haven't you a word of praise?" she asked, brokenly.

He regarded her with much intentness. "Too much praise, Adelaide, to put it into words. I know how distasteful it is to you. You are a brave little girl!" He patted her

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shoulder in his old way. "But remember what this man has done. He deserves more than a cramping of his limbs for several days."

She tried to be calm. "Will you be successful?" she asked tremulously.

"There is no reason why I should not be," he answered. "I rely on you to carry out your part, you know. And I know you will. Good-night, little girl."

When she had closed the door she stared long and blankly at the entrance through which he had passed. Then she rocked herself to and fro, murmuring and whispering to herself: "A good tool for his ends—a good tool."

She threw the required clothes into the trunk, closed and locked it. "After all," she sighed, "it's better to be a tool for him than ——" She did not finish her sentence.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN THE PRISON HOUSE.

A little after twelve word had been taken to the driver of the droshky of Count Mobrikoff that the Count would remain at the hotel for the night, but that the droshky was to be waiting for him the next morning at nine o'clock, when he would visit the fort of St. Basil. This message was sent from the room of M. Theophile Lemaire.

Within that same apartment several changes took place between midnight and morning, and had there been an observer near by, he might have sworn that three men occupied the same room. For into the room and to bed went M. Theophile Lemaire, a Frenchman with a slightly bald pate, a small waxed mustache and heavy eyebrows. When the rays of morning sunlight disclosed the sleeper there was no sign of M. Theophile Lemaire. The snowy counterpane covered

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the form of a man with light brown hair, clean-shaven, and evidently of Anglo-Saxon origin. When he awoke and stood erect in his pajamas, it would not have been hard for anyone who knew him to recognize Mr. Yorke Norroy.

But Yorke Norroy existed only during the time that he took his bath and shaved. Nine o'clock saw him standing in the lobby of the Hotel d'Angleterre an officer of his imperial Russian majesty's army, whose hair was coal-black and whose mouth was shaded by an enormous military mustache turned upward in German style; his eyebrows were heavy and his military cap was pulled down to shade his eyes. Evidently, M. le Comte Mobrikoff had contracted a severe cold, for he spoke hoarsely and his neck was swathed with a white silk kerchief. The collar of his greatcoat was turned upward to protect his throat.

He lighted a cigarette and inquired in a husky tone if his droshky awaited him. On being informed it did, he went out of the

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hotel lobby and into the street where his driver assisted him into the vehicle. In the same hoarse tone, he directed him to drive to the fort of St. Basil.

Through the streets of the Kitai-Gorod and over the frozen snow the droshky sped, its owner smoking cigarette after cigarette and gazing out on the passing crowd. Many peasants and moujiks doffed their caps and he saluted them gravely, while occupants of other vehicles called to him as they sped by.

Through the Kitai-Gorod, into the Beloi-Gorod, and finally into the Zemlianai, the droshky of Mobrikoff went. The last, being the Chinese city, was naturally dirtier than either the European or the Tartar quarters, and the vehicle went more slowly on account of the slippery streets.

When the Iverskaya Chasnovnia was reached, the driver reined in his horses and doffed his hat to the sacred icon within the Iberian Chapel, and Norroy, sitting behind him, perforce did the same. After this act of devotion, the horses, started again by a

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swift cut from the driver's whip, dashed through the Resurrection Gate of the Chinese wall and out beyond the city, where, a few versts away, the fort of St. Basil frowned ominously on the waters of the Moskowa.

It required but little time to make the journey now, and they were soon halted by the Siberian sentinel who stood beside the first gate of St. Basil.

"It is the great colonel, Count Mobrikoff," the driver informed him, in the queer *argot* of the Baltic provinces—half Slav, half Teutonic.

Instantly the soldier's carbine was raised in salute. The iron gates swung open ponderously, and the droshky rolled over the stones of the courtyard of the outer fort, through an embrasure, and, after several more halts and salutes, stopped in the central courtyard.

The sergeant who was in charge of the guards of the inner court evidently recognized the occupant of the droshky to be the

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chief of engineers, for he clicked his heels together sharply and saluted.

The false Mobrikoff saluted the sergeant in return, alighted and walked past the line of guards, following the non-commissioned officer.

"You wish to see M. le Colonel Mebristiwsky, colonel?" the sergeant had asked.

"Yes," replied the supposed colonel, shortly. He still spoke in the hoarse tone which indicated that his cold affected his throat muscles to the extent of preventing him from speaking plainly.

He followed the sergeant through a succession of passages, and waited while he knocked on the door of the room which held the illustrious presence of M. le Colonel Mebristiwsky, governor of the fort of St. Basil.

The door was opened by an orderly and Norroy passed into the room.

The man with grizzled hair who sat at the desk in the middle of the room arose on Norroy's entrance and bade him the usual good-morning.

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"I have a cold, M. Mebristiwsky," he replied, in answer to the request that he remove his cloak. "I fear it is getting close to my lungs."

Norroy's Russian was without a flaw, but he found little occasion to use it on this mission, for Mebristiwsky conversed with him in French, as is usual between gentlemen in Russia, their own language being reserved more for the purpose of speaking to inferiors. After several inquiries regarding some matters of which Norroy knew nothing, but which he managed to answer in a discreet manner which aroused no suspicion, the secret agent asked concerning the American prisoner.

"He is violent, as usual," answered the governor. "He swears at anyone who enters his cell, and curses the Little Father in terms which would shock even a hardened *roue* like yourself."

"I wish to see him again," said Norroy, cutting the governor's peroration short. The governor, frowning, rang for the orderly.

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“Take the Colonel Mobrikoff to the cell of the American.”

Norroy followed the orderly, seemingly into the bowels of the earth. A lantern was necessary to show the way, and they plunged into dank, evil-smelling corridors where the lanterns of other soldiers, keeping guard, bobbed up and down like will-o'-the-wisps in the darkness. Finally the orderly asked a question of one of the guards, and a huge key was fitted into a lock, a bolt shot and an iron door swung open.

“Here is the lantern, Colonel Mobrikoff,” said the orderly, with respect. “Do you wish me to remain?”

Norroy replied in the negative, and then addressed the guard: “Close the door, fellow. I have something to say to the prisoner in private. Close the door and bolt it.”

The guard saluted and murmured acquiescence. Whereupon the iron door clanged to again, and the bolt was shot. Norroy lifted the lantern, and its light fell upon a mass of straw and a man lying with his back to

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the door, who was apparently unconcerned at his entrance.

"M'sieur Gaylord," he said, in French.

The prisoner snarled: "Is that you, you frog-eyed coyote?" in English; then, remembering that Mobrikoff did not understand that tongue, translated it into French—"Frog-eyed son of a—a—a—loup-garou," he finished, desperately. The insult seemed ineffective in the tongue of the Gaul, and he racked his brain for a fitting addition.

Yorke Norroy wasted little time. He walked over to the recumbent man, who was now glaring at him, and said in very low tones, and in English: "Don't be surprised; don't cry out, and don't make any sort of a noise. I am not Mobrikoff."

The man stared at him in the light of the lantern, and Norroy had a chance to see the hollow eyes, the sunken cheeks and the wasted hands.

"Not Mobrikoff?" he gasped. "Not Mobrikoff? You are not——"

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Norroy seated himself on the rude stool by the side of the straw. "I received your message, Mr. Gaylord. I have come to get you out of this. Now, please don't ask any questions, but do exactly as I tell you."

Omitting the preliminaries, Norroy told him of the capture of Mobrikoff, and the way in which he had gained entrance to St. Basil. The listener's eyes glowed in admiration, and the weary, haggard look faded from them.

"We must waste no time," said Norroy. "Take off those clothes of yours as I take off mine." He spoke in a whisper and immediately proceeded to disrobe. He continued to speak while in the process, and by the time they had exchanged garments the whole scheme was perfectly plain to Gaylord.

Norroy whisked off the false mustache and wig and placed them on Gaylord's face. Then from an inner pocket, he took out a make-up box, such as is carried by those of the theatrical profession, and by the dim light of the lantern proceeded to make Gay-

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lord's face a passable imitation of the Russian's whose uniform he now wore.

“Speak hoarsely, as though you have a cold, and do not answer any questions unless forced to do so—your Russian is execrable and your French is worse. It will not be necessary for you to return to the governor's room. Simply follow the orderly out of this dungeon to the upper floors and then tell him to lead you to your droshky. Salute each soldier who salutes you. When you enter the droshky simply say Hotel d' Angleterre, and the driver will take you there. Dismiss him when you reach the hotel, and send up one of Mobrikoff's cards to Miss Moray. She knows who you are, and she will assist you and accompany you. The grand express leaves for Konigsberg at noon. She has reserved berths in the wagonlit for you and for herself. Here is your passport, which I secured from the United States minister before leaving Paris. It reads for Mr. John Moray, actor. You are supposed to be Miss Moray's brother. When you arrive in Ko-

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nigsberg, you will both go to the Hotel Zu Hohenloe. There will be a third person in the party, but he is provided with a comfortable sleeping apartment in a trunk."

Gaylord suddenly burst into hysterical laughter as he thought of his arch-enemy cramped within the confines of a narrow box and forced to endure a railway journey in such quarters. Norroy placed his hand over Gaylord's mouth.

"Don't make an ass of yourself," he said, roughly. "The rest of the scheme Miss Moray will explain to you. See that you carry out her instructions, for my life may depend on it. You understand?"

"But how will you escape?" demanded the inventor. "I feel like a cad, leaving you in this hole. God! if you knew——"

"Rest easy," Norroy assured him. "I am no *Sidney Carton*. This is not a question of heroics. I have my orders to see that you are free, and this is part of the carrying out of them. I hope to see you in Washington within the month." He raised

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his voice and called out in the hoarse tones which he had assumed for the part of Mobrikoff. "I have finished with the prisoner. Open the door."

Again the bolt was released and the door creaked. "Now go," he whispered to Gaylord. "And be cautious—very cautious."

Gaylord pushed up the collar of the coat and as the door opened passed out. Norroy heard him tell the orderly to lead him to the courtyard.

As the door grated back to its former place, and Norroy knew that now he was a prisoner in a Russian dungeon, it would have seemed that a feeling of unquiet would have come over him. But Mr. Yorke Norroy only laughed softly, as was his wont, and twirled about on his finger the seal ring of the Count Mobrikoff.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLIGHT OF THE GOVERNOR.

"You took great risks," said the secretary gravely, when Norroy had proceeded thus far with his narrative.

Norroy waved his cigarette airily. "Really, I think you overrate my modest endeavors, Mr. Secretary," he replied. "I took no risks at all, strictly speaking." He straightened the crescent of pearls in the crimson scarf which he wore, and crossed his legs, showing a pair of well-formed ankles in crimson hose, and shapely feet shod in tan shoes. He was attired for the tennis courts, carried a racquet in his hand and wore a suit of white flannels. He was seated in the place where his conversations with the secretary were generally held—in that gentleman's private library.

The sun streamed through the bay windows and revealed the trees in the grounds

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without just about ready to open their buds in the warm zephyr of a beautiful spring day. It was just a month since Norroy had taken Gaylord's place in the Moscow prison.

"However, to cut the story rather short—for I have an appointment at three and it only lacks twenty minutes of that at the present time—I remained in that cell for that day and night and well into the next day. By that time I was quite sure that Gaylord and Miss Hardesty were ensconced in the Zu Hohenloe, so I decided that it was about time to teach M. Mebristiwsky that there were other people capable of playing a high-handed game outside of his imperial Russian majesty's domains. Therefore I kicked up an infernal racket that brought the guard in with blood in his eye and a desire to murder me. I told him that I wished to see the governor immediately. You see, it was the day for the second knouting of Gaylord, and I had no desire to pose as a martyr for the cause, especially after having seen Gaylord's back. It appears that the

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governor had given instructions that if Gaylord thought better of being knouted he was to be brought into his worshipful presence, so into that presence I was taken.

“The guard, being a squat Siberian and as devoid of intelligence as a hedgehog, didn’t notice any difference in my appearance and that of Gaylord’s—all foreigners looking alike to him, I suppose. But when I was put before M. Mebristiwsky, that gentleman’s face was a study. Finally he managed to call the soldier two or three things which I wouldn’t care to translate into English, and told him he had brought the wrong man. I presumed it was about time for me to cut in then, consequently I did. I told him that I was the only M. Gaylord in the prison, and that if he would send away his soldiers I would explain. He was rather timorous, so he had my hands tied behind my back and then told the soldiers to leave the room.

“It didn’t take me very long to explain to M. Mebristiwsky exactly how the trick had

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been turned, and his cheeks got flabby and his complexion an ashy-gray. I told him that if he would examine the index finger of my right hand, he would see M. Mobrikoff's seal ring. I further informed him that M. Mobrikoff was out of Russia, and that he was in the hands of my confederates, and closely guarded by M. Gaylord himself.

"Deponent further saith that M. Mobrikoff will be held for the space of one week. If, at the end of that time, I do not appear in a certain city outside the czar's domains, there will be one Russian nobleman the less in the Almanach de Gotha. Also, M. Gaylord would immediately file his complaint against the Russian Government with the United States minister at Berlin, telling the whole story, but omitting the death of Mobrikoff. Somehow, this method of reasoning seemed to appeal to M. Mebristiwsky."

The secretary laughed. "I should imagine that it would have influenced him."

"It did, and there were rare doings about the fort of St. Basil for some time after that.

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I assured the governor that I was a gentleman and would make no attempt to get away if my hands were untied. He untied them and gave me some vodka— he was not a bad sort, but the vodka was. Then he sent out messengers to Moscow, and before an hour had passed I became the center of an astounded group of Russkis. The governor of Moscow was there, and the czar's civil administrator; also the Grand Duke Vladimir and any number of high ranking army officers.

“They went into another room and held a consultation, leaving me to my cigarettes and vodka, and the perusal of some English magazines lying about. At the end of a little time the governor entered. It had evidently been decided that I had the whip hand.

“The governor said my story had been received with great surprise; that it was news to them that they were holding an American prisoner; that M. Mobrikoff had stated that Gaylord was a dangerous Finnish nihilist

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who had threatened the life of the Little Father of all the Russias; that if I had come to them and told them the story, they would have released Gaylord and disgraced Mobrikoff. It was a beautiful string of falsehoods; well-constructed lies, with the local color all correct and told in the most sincere manner.

“The governor emphasized the love which lay between the countries of Russia and the United States—sang me that old song about Russia having saved the Union during the Civil War by sending her fleet to protect us. Hold me prisoner? Why, certainly not. They admired my courage and devotion in rescuing my friend, and insinuated that I was in the service of the United States. I told them that I was not; that Gaylord was my cousin and that I was an actor by profession; that I had a Russian nurse and had learned the language from her; my name was Harold Mellin; in fact, I handed them just as intricate a tangle of untruths as they handed me.

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“The governor finished by saying that if Mobrikoff were killed it would serve him right; and that if my companions did not harm him they had better warn him not to return to Russia, for if he did so he would be given a pleasant assignment in Omsk or thereabouts, with a coal pick as his means of sustenance. Of course I knew all this was not true, and that Mobrikoff would not be deprived of a single perquisite of his rank and station unless the United States wanted revenge and a scapegoat was needed.

“Of course it was perfectly plain to them that they lost everything and gained nothing by keeping me a prisoner, or by harming me in any way. They wanted Mobrikoff back, and they didn’t want the United States to kick up any shindy. Now that they had lost the secret of the gun, they didn’t care anything about me.

“To cut the story short”—Norroy looked at his watch and replaced it—“I dined that evening with the whole assortment of dignitaries, and they made a sweet attempt to get

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me drunk and let loose all I knew. But, boasting aside, it is a good Russian who can take more of the fiery liquor than I can, so that failed. After dinner we went to a ball at the Winter Palace, and I met many and various pretty women, who enticed me to drink more. However, that doesn't matter.

"The next morning, to the sorrow of M. Mikhaelovitch, I gathered up the three Broadway show girls and deposited them on the express for Paris. The next train was for Konigsberg, and that I took, promising the governor, who accompanied me to the station in state, that M. Mobrikoff would arrive in Moscow at an early date.

"Of course there were four or five of the governor's spies on the train, and they had the temerity to suppose that I didn't know them. They followed me to the hotel, but they learned nothing.

"Adelaide Hardesty and Gaylord were there, Gaylord under the name of Moray, and Adelaide also. Gaylord had two rooms, and in one of them he kept that big trunk.

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Adelaide said that it gave him great pleasure to go in there and talk to the repentant Mobrikoff. I am afraid Gaylord was a little cruel, for he kept Mobrikoff bound hand and foot all the time, feeding him with oats and black bread only—prison fare. When I arrived, I swear I think the beggar was sorry, for I fear he had set his mind on dispatching M. Mobrikoff.

“Of course I had given my word, and that ended his homicidal schemes. Mobrikoff was given a plentiful meal, and told to eat all of it possible, in order that it might last him for three. Then we packed him neatly into his box, put the clothes about him, gagged him, locked the trunk, and I stenciled on it in large letters: ‘M. Mebristiowsky, governor of Fort St. Basil, Moscow, Russia,’ and in red ink on the corner: ‘Game. Perishable. Open at once.’ ”

The secretary burst into a hearty laugh, and Norroy arose, twirling his racquet. “I should like to have seen the governor’s face,” the secretary remarked; “and to have

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heard what Mobrikoff said when he was unbound and ungagged."

"Mr. Secretary," said Yorke Norroy, "you have never heard a Russian when he is extremely angry. I have. Therefore, as I do not like the profane and the vulgar, I cannot share in your wish."

The secretary stretched out his hand. "Well, play your tennis, Yorke," he said, paternally. "You've done a good piece of work. I thank you. Come in to-morrow at five."

Norroy's eyes had in them a glint of satisfaction. A great respect and friendship existed between these two men.

"Thank you, Mr. Secretary," said Norroy. "I rather think you're right. But you really owe me no thanks. I discovered a marvelous brand of cigarettes in a little place in Moscow, and the trip was worth while just for that."

He offered his Chinese case to the secretary, who shook his head. Norroy lighted one himself, drew on his gloves, caught the

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racquet in his left hand, and bade the secretary good-afternoon.

The Isle of St. Anthony

CHAPTER I.

THE WITS OF MISS HONORA NUGENT.

“And so,” concluded the secretary of state, “the plans of the defenses of New York harbor came into her possession.”

Yorke Norroy smiled wearily and drew on one of his gloves. The secretary’s story had been very long drawn-out, and it contained nothing that particularly interested the diplomatic agent.

“The affair seems to be simple enough,” he remarked, as he buttoned the glove. “If the woman has the plans, she should be arrested and searched — or her luggage searched beforehand and the arrest following.”

“But that has already been done—the

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searching, I mean," returned the secretary. "You hardly suppose that such a simple solution would not have been tried long ago, do you? As soon as Captain Riener reported the affair, he was suspended from the service, and a board of engineer officers are now considering his case, preparatory to court-martial. This was done with the most profound secrecy, in order that she should have no wind of it. Then secret agents entered her apartments while she was away, opened trunks, bags, boxes and everything in sight, but nothing was discovered. Not only once was this done—four men have been detailed on it at different times, but not a trace of the papers was discovered. Not only that, but they found no shred of evidence that would connect her with the Russian secret service."

"Then I suppose that, while you have been deliberating, the woman went to the Russian embassy and delivered the plans to the minister?" suggested Norroy.

"Wrong again," returned the secretary.

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"She has been kept under constant surveillance ever since she has been in Washington, and not once has she gone to the embassy or met the Russian minister secretly. Nor has she been in conversation with him long enough at any time to hold a consultation. In fact," added the secretary, lighting his cigar, "I doubt if the Russian minister is aware of the fact that Miss Nugent is in the employ of his government."

"Let me see," deliberated Norroy thoughtfully. "According to what you have told me, the papers have been in Miss Nugent's possession for two weeks. Why hasn't she left the United States?"

The secretary smiled. "We have seen to that," he returned. "You have one failing, Norroy. You imagine that you are the only man in the state department who takes precautions. Word has been sent to all the steamship offices to refuse her passage out of the United States. This is easily done, by telling her that there is no room. She has made six attempts to buy tickets for dif-

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ferent points of Europe, and every attempt has failed."

"She knows, then, that the government has taken a hand," interposed Norroy, drawing his cigarette case from his pocket and tapping upon it with his slender, almost womanish fingers.

"If she has wits enough to fool the engineer corps of the army, she certainly has wits enough for that. Which is proven by the fact that she has gotten around our precautions."

Norroy waited for an explanation.

"Of course you know that Miss Nugent is related to several families in Ireland who stand high at the Court of St. James, and if she were arrested and nothing proven, there would be a great stir across the water, and the British ambassador would pay me a formal visit and read me a little monograph on the rights of British subjects—for she is one. Now, although Captain Riener is quite sure she has the plans, he cannot prove that she took them, nor can we prove

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that she has them now. If she were arrested, she would manage to get away with them in some manner, and then it would be necessary for the United States to make an apology to Great Britain. Also, Miss Nugent would sue for large damages, and the yellow press would have something to fill their columns for a week. The affair would place the United States in an extremely ridiculous light."

A shadow of a smile played around Norroy's thin lips, as he extracted a crested cigarette from his case, decorated with golden Chinese dragons. He rolled the paper tube gently between his fingers.

"It seems to me that this does look like something in my line, after all," he said, striking a wax match and igniting the cigarette.

"Oh, you begin to think so, eh?" queried the secretary, with much sarcasm. Norroy's wearied expressions and looks of boredom frequently irritated the head of the state department. "Perhaps you will find the affair

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a little more complicated than you think. Miss Nugent sails from New York in three days!"

"Didn't I understand you to say that you had made it impossible for her to buy tickets?" asked Norroy, looking inquiringly at the secretary.

"Exactly. But Philipppse Van Reypen doesn't sell tickets for private yachting trips on his own yacht, the *Sylph*," returned the secretary, with emphasis.

"So she has procured an invitation, has she?" Norroy looked on the point of really laughing this time. "Well, that's rather clever of her, isn't it? It is hardly the easiest thing in the world for anyone to get an invitation from Polly Van Reypen. I wonder how Miss Nugent managed it?—through Phil, I dare say."

"You know where the yacht is going, don't you?" asked Norroy's chief.

"Bound for Key West first, then across to the Azores and Madeira, so some one told me."

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"Quite right. Miss Nugent will be aboard. She will likely leave them at the Azores—and where will the plans go?"

"To that most excellent gentleman, the czar, I presume," answered Norroy.

"You seem to look at the matter in a humorous light," said the secretary, sharply. "Do you realize that for the plans of New York to fall into the hands of any foreign power is an extremely serious thing?"

"Naturally, Mr. Secretary," returned Norroy, calmly. "But it is quite amusing to think that a blue-eyed Irish girl like this little Nugent should have so thoroughly upset the heads of the department chiefs. The secretary of war was almost wild when he told me about it; and you—well, you're always the same, Mr. Secretary, but I can tell by that look in your eye that you regard this affair in a manner far from calm."

"Quite right, I do, and I can hardly see how it is that anyone who has the welfare of his country at heart could do otherwise. It is impossible to arrest this woman, and we

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cannot tell Philipppse Van Reypen that he must not take her, so, unless something is quickly done, those papers will become the property of the czar in just about two weeks."

Norroy drummed thoughtfully on the table near by with his slender fingers. His eyes bespoke concentration of thought. Finally he said:

"To epitomize the situation, Mr. Secretary: Miss Nugent carries these plans on her person. She is going yachting with Van Reypen. Legally, we cannot prevent her from leaving the United States——"

"Ah—er—openly would be a better word," corrected the secretary.

"Openly, we cannot prevent her from leaving the United States and taking the papers in question to Europe. That is the problem, isn't it?"

The secretary nodded affirmatively. "And the solution?"

"I don't know. It is rather a difficult knot to untie, and—openly—we can't cut it.

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It seems to be imperative that I go with the Van Reypens on their yachting trip."

"That is the first step, but afterward?"

Norroy arose and drew on the other glove. He twirled his swagger stick and studied a life-sized portrait of the President which hung in the corner.

"Afterward—well, I'll have to think the thing over a bit. While I am cogitating, I will procure the invitation to the trip. My sister is a friend of Polly Van Reypen, and I know Phil. So I don't think that will be difficult. You say they sail in three days? I will consult with you again before that. I go to New York on the two o'clock limited and will see Van Reypen. Good-morning, Mr. Secretary."

The two days following the conversation brought no news from Norroy, but the second night found that gentleman sitting in the private library of the secretary's Connecticut Avenue residence. Within a few moments after the footman had announced the secret agent's presence, the head of the

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state department entered and greeted him expectantly.

"Yes, I have the invitation," was Norroy's answer to the other's unspoken question. "I followed Philipppse Van Reyppen from club to club in Manhattan, and finally out to Tuxedo. Of course, I didn't ask outright for the bid, but I impressed on him that I was at a loss as to how to get to St. Anthony——"

"To St. Anthony?" repeated the secretary, mystified. "Why St. Anthony? What St. Anthony?"

Norroy smiled deprecatingly. "Pardon my omission, Mr. Secretary. I am telling the story like a newspaper—results first. St. Anthony is a little island of the Bahamas, and was used once by a number of New York men for a hunting rendezvous. But the club broke up and the cabins were abandoned. The island is now unpopulated. It is still the property of the club, and no one is allowed to settle there, even if they should wish to—but I doubt their wishes."

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"I don't follow you," interrupted the secretary, sharply. "The New York hunting club is certainly irrelevant to the case upon which I imagined you were working."

"Just a moment, please. St. Anthony is directly in the route which the yacht must take to get to Key West. As I said before, there is no one on the island. Now, Carson Huntley is a member of the club which owns the island, and he has a perfect right to use it as he wishes——"

"Do you mean the Carson Huntley who was taken into the service on your recommendation?"

Norroy nodded. "Now, it would be quite probable that Huntley might take a fancy to run over to St. Anthony and spend the summer. Since his money disappeared, he cannot afford Newport and Narragansett. As I am Huntley's friend, what more natural than that he should invite me to spend the time with him? And, having accepted the invitation, I naturally wish to get to St. Anthony. No vessels stop there. Why can-

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not Philippse Van Reypen go a few hours out of his course and land me on St. Anthony?"

The secretary eyed him searchingly and nodded approval.

"Well, that is what I told Van Reypen, and he was very glad to have me—so he said. He will drop me at St. Anthony if I so wish, but he assures me that I am welcome to make the whole trip with him, if I will. I, on the other hand, gave him an urgent invitation—in Huntley's name—to inspect the island and enjoy the hospitality of the lodge for a few hours. He has accepted."

"Therefore, it will be necessary to send Huntley there without delay," interjected the secretary.

"Quite so. It will take the yacht three days to make St. Anthony. Huntley and three minor agents can make a quick passage to Savannah on the railroad, leaving to-night, I should suggest. You will give him an order on the revenue service at Savannah to use the cutter to take him to St. Anthony

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immediately. He will purchase whatever he needs in the way of provisions, etc., and, on reaching St. Anthony, fix the old lodge up so as to look as though it were fit to live in. He will have a day and a half start of the *Sylph*."

Norroy lowered his voice, and the further conversation that passed between him and the secretary would have been inaudible even to a person in close proximity. Several times the secretary's face showed signs of intense amusement, and he gave vent to several short laughs. Norroy extracted a cigarette and lighted it deftly. The important part of the affair had plainly been outlined, for he allowed his voice to take its usual conversational height.

"Huntley is a clever fellow, and can act the part. I should advise the selection of Turner, Hillman, Jardine and Miss Hardesty for the others. They are all at leisure at the present time, and all in Washington or near by."

"Not Jardine," amended the secretary.

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"He is in New Orleans. I think Matheson will do as well, however."

"Yes, Matheson is a good man," was Norroy's agreement. "And when Huntley has trained them a little, I imagine the four will play their parts successfully. I am going to see Huntley now. I wired him from New York to be at my apartment here at eight o'clock. Shall I then send him to you?"

The secretary replied in the affirmative.

"The idea sounds well," he said, judicially, "and should be carried out. I will attend to this end of it. When do you leave Washington?"

"On the midnight sleeper. The *Sylph* sails from Tompkinsville to-morrow at four o'clock in the afternoon, and I have some few things to attend to before she sails."

He adjusted a slight flare in the bosom of his spotless dress shirt and sprang open his opera hat. Then, lighting another cigarette, he bade the secretary good-night.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE "SYLPH."

Miss Honora Nugent, Irish and very pretty, was the type of woman which is most calculated to disturb the mental poise of a man and cause him to do strange things. Captain Theodore H. Riener, U. S. A., was one of the men who had fallen under her many witcheries, with the result that Captain Riener was at that time going through the painful ordeal of a court-martial, while Miss Honora Nugent carried a precious packet of papers on her person.

She had black hair and very blue eyes—eyes that appealed and besought. Her whole charm lay in her complete womanliness. She was slender and graceful, petite in figure and soft of voice. She was not the kind of woman who plays golf or is athletic in any way, but who is most in her element in a dark corner of a porch or con-

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servatory, in evening dress, with soft, velvety arms showing pink and white in the half-light and enticing a man to any action which will win her to that frame of mind where the aforesaid velvety arms will be twined about his manly neck.

Miss Nugent ruled through utter subjectiveness. When in her presence, a man was filled with his own importance and a desire to protect this frail, clinging creature from the rebuffs of the rude world. She seemed out of place on a tennis court or a golf links. She appealed to men in the way that a woman appeals to the Turkish mind—she should be kept in a place where splashing fountains made music, costly rugs adorned the floors, and velvet hangings and soft lights completed the picture.

How much of this impression was natural and how much of it was caused by Miss Honora Nugent's clever acting is not quite determinable. She did not alter her pose when in the presence of those who employed her, and refused to discuss any subject which

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might not, with all propriety, be introduced between man and woman. The heads of Russia's secret service made no pretense at understanding her, and were always as courteous and deferential in her presence as they would have been in that of a grand duchess. For Honora Nugent was very valuable to them when Anglo-Saxon secrets were to be ferreted out, and, save for one or two minor affairs, she had always carried out her missions successfully. Her birth gave her the *entree* into the fashionable worlds of England and America, and the rest was accomplished through her seductive charm.

But, withal, Miss Nugent was, as may be imagined, worldly-wise in the strongest sense of the word, and she almost feared at one time that this last affair of hers was a little more than she could carry through. After the papers had come into her possession, the transferring of them to those to whom they would be invaluable was a far more difficult task than she imagined.

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She was perfectly well aware of the fact that the United States Government knew the plans were in her possession, and she knew, further, that they had no means of proving it. She made no complaints when her luggage was searched, for she had expected this move, and the plans had never left her person. She understood the reason for the steamship companies' inability to sell her a ticket to any European port.

In this juncture had come Tommy Sitcell, who had spent a small fortune on her in the shape of flowers, opera boxes and candy. Tommy Sitcell was one of the guests of Van Reypen in the coming voyage of the *Sylph*. Miss Nugent had discovered this, and she went out of her way to attend an afternoon tea at which she was sure Tommy Sitcell would be. It was not hard to turn the conversation in such a way that Tommy would proffer his services in the way of procuring a bid for Miss Nugent. The Van Reypens knew her, and Phil Van Reypen, as all men, more than liked the little Irish lady. He

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asked Mrs. Van Reypen to call on her at her apartments near Central Park, and Mrs. Van Reypen, being an obedient wife, did so. At first Miss Nugent would not think of it—it was too late—all their plans were arranged—and—but what a trip it would be! (A sigh.) Mrs. Van Reypen insisted because she knew her husband would accuse her of a cold invitation if Miss Nugent refused acceptance. In view of the insistence, Miss Nugent accepted.

“It was really very fortunate,” argued Philippse Van Reypen, the day before sailing, “that I met Yorke Norroy. That Nugent girl will make an odd pair and leave Dolly Banks to herself—for I intended her for Tommy. Now Yorke can take her—if he will. But I rather think he’ll be able to make his pick.”

By four o’clock of the day after Norroy’s second conversation with the head of the state department, the seven guests and their host and hostess had embarked on the *Sylph* and were lounging about the deck or sitting

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in steamer chairs, gazing at the sky-scrapers of their beloved city, which they were leaving for several months. Philippse Van Reypen had not informed them regarding the belated invitation, and his wife, noting the time of day, requested to be informed as to why the yacht was being held.

"For our last guest, dear," returned Van Reypen. "And, if I am not greatly in the wrong, here he comes now."

He pointed to a small steam launch which was bearing down on the yacht. "He is a friend of yours, Polly," said Van Reypen—"Yorke Norroy."

"Yorke Norroy—impossible! Really, is it, Phil? Lend me your glasses." She took the binoculars from her husband and gazed at the oncoming boat. "It is Yorke Norroy," she said, with a gratified smile. Archie Vanderness scowled.

"I wonder what makes that man popular?" he desired to be informed from Miss Page Carewe.

"Because he is a *man*," answered Miss

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Carewe. "You feel that you can rely on Yorke, somehow. Other men——"

She eyed Mr. Vanderness, who had once stood on a pier while a woman nearly drowned before his eyes. His excuse was that he couldn't swim.

"I'm glad you feel that way about him," he commented. "But it's my private opinion—— Well, never mind. But what happens to him when he is away from civilization? That's what I should like to know."

"Then you'd better ask him," suggested Mrs. Van Reypen, who had overheard. "See, the launch is touching."

"Who is he, Mr. Sitcell?" asked Honora Nugent. "The Washington man—cotillion leader? Norroy—yes, that's the name."

"Yes, that's the chap," returned Sitcell. "He's rather a queer sort. Seems a sort of an ass sometimes, but has some clever ideas about acting and all that sort of thing. He's a Baltimorean, really. There he is."

A slim, erect figure in white flannel trousers, serge coat and white-peaked yachting

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cap came in view at the head of the accommodation ladder, and, on seeing the group on the boat deck, Norroy walked up and removed his cap, showing his well-groomed, light hair. He had that type of face that denotes the man who rules—high cheek bones, prominent chin and obstinate jaw. His eyes were large and of no definite color, but there was a hardness, a steeliness, about them that was not altogether pleasant. He smiled and greeted the folks he knew.

"I asked Ethel, you know," Mrs. Van Reypen informed him, referring to Norroy's sister, "but she had something on. She didn't say a word about your coming. If I had known——"

"I didn't know, myself, Polly," said Norroy. "It wasn't until Carson Huntley proposed this St. Anthony affair that——"

"Carson Huntley?" repeated Mrs. Van Reypen, and several of that gentleman's acquaintances in the group echoed the name. "Where is he?"

"Oh, haven't you told them, Phil?"

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Van Reypen shook his head. "Clean forgot it, Yorke," he replied.

"Why, Carson's gone to St. Anthony for the summer. You remember the little island where we used to have our gun club, until the club got broken up? There's no one there now, and Carson seems to be looking for solitude, so he's gone there to spend the summer. He invited me to join him, but neglected to send a boat, so Phil has consented to drop me off. I invited you all to stop off with me, and Phil accepted. Now, individually——"

"What is there to see at St. Anthony?" put in Vanderness, who had been a member of the club. "I think——"

"Never mind what you think, Archie," interrupted Page Carewe in an aside. Mr. Vanderness stared at her sullenly.

"Why, yes; we'll be glad to see Carson again, won't we, Phil?" said Mrs. Van Reypen. "He's dropped out of sight for the last year or so. And I understand that St. Anthony is an ideal little place."

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"It is rather—except for the solitude."

Polly Van Reypen suddenly remembered that Norroy did not know Honora Nugent, and without more ado she presented him. The entire party remained on deck until the Statue of Liberty faded from view, and then went below to prepare for dinner.

"Who is this Miss Nugent?" inquired Norroy of his hostess, as they descended to the saloon deck.

"Related to the Wicklows, I think Tommy said, and she is, too; there's no doubt of that. She's rather a pretty girl, isn't she? But so doll-like. I should think she would grow tiresome after a while." She spoke in confidence to Norroy, as he had the reputation of a man who never repeated.

"You think so?" he inquired.

"Yes. She's unoriginal—and she says so little, and what she does say is so commonplace. Like a British girl—hide-bound with convention. An awful wearying thing to dress for dinner on shipboard, isn't it?"

As she entered her stateroom, Yorke Nor-

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roy smiled rather broadly.

"Doll-like, is she? Unoriginal? Tiresome?" Then he did something very rare for him. He laughed heartily.

"And that's the whole secret," he meditated. "She's intensely feminine. She makes asses out of the men, and keeps the regard of the women by appearing to be a foeman unworthy of their steel." He shook his head sagely. "She is undoubtedly a wonder! Undoubtedly!"

CHAPTER III.

THE "MALO HOMBRES" OF ST. ANTHONY.

While the yachting party sat at breakfast on the third day out, Holmes, the third officer of the *Sylph*, entered the dining saloon to inform Mr. Van Reypen that St. Anthony had been sighted.

"The skipper doesn't know the island, sir," he said, "and he's going entirely by chart. There are no anchorages on the chart, for St. Anthony isn't a stopping place for vessels of any draught."

Norroy swallowed his coffee and ate his last portion of roll and marmalade. "Vanderness knows the island, and so do I. The best anchorage is on the southeast side, on a line with the little peak, isn't it, Archie?"

"Yes," replied Vanderness; "it's a very inconvenient place to anchor, though. The lodge is two miles inland."

"I don't think any of us will mind a couple

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of miles after two days and a half on ship-board," put in Polly Van Reyepen. Her husband told Holmes to change the ship's bearings in order to make the anchorage suggested, and, when Holmes had gone, turned to Norroy. "I wonder if Carson'll be down to meet us."

"He will if he sights the yacht," answered Norroy. "But that I very much doubt, as he is a late riser, and, besides, the lodge is so situated that the southeast side isn't visible from it."

"But you know the way, don't you?" asked Page Carewe of Archie Vanderness.

"Rather!" he replied. "And so does Norroy. Oh, there's no fear of being lost. But it's a climb!"

Yorke Norroy went on deck and to the bridge, to assist the navigating officer in locating the anchorage. St. Anthony now loomed before them, green and gold in the morning sunlight, a veritable emerald of the sea, set down amid a vast expanse of turquoise blue water and gleaming, white sand.

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As the vessel slowed down and began to run counter to the current, the water became transparent, and the shells and stones at the bottom could be as plainly discerned as though there were no water covering them. It was growing a trifle warm, and those who had not previously done so went to their staterooms and emerged in white ducks and drills, the men bringing out their Panama hats and pith helmets and the women similar headgear with masses of white drapery attached.

Norroy left the bridge for the boat deck and sat down next to Miss Nugent, who looked a veritable angel of a Raphael painting in her immaculate and shining white, one tiny foot, canvas-shod and with ankle white-hosed, peeping out from quantities of white skirts and lingerie. Her blue eyes had a sweet glance in them for him, and her little, even teeth showed in a smile when he said something intended to amuse her. Norroy had grown rather fond of the little Irish girl since his coming aboard the vessel, and,

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much to the disgust of Tommy Sitcell, had taken up more than his share of her time. But Norroy's regard was perfectly free from any attraction in which affection figured. He admired the girl as he admired all people, on his side or opposed to him, who had keen wits and the ability to put them to use, and he eliminated the sex question altogether. She was simply one secret agent and he another. They represented different countries, and it was his duty to do all in his power for his own. Not only was she clever, however, but she was attractive. He had gotten in that frame of mind where he hardly blamed Captain Riener.

On the other hand, Miss Nugent had shown without reservation that Norroy impressed her very favorably. It might have been possible, had Norroy chosen to try it, for the secret agent to compass his own ends through professing an affection for her, but he tried to consider the guest of Van Reypen and Miss Nugent, agent of Russia, apart. Through deft questioning, he had learned

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several things from her which were most useful, but he carried his personal acquaintance no further.

Norroy appealed to women mainly because he impressed them as being stronger than they. Though courteous and deferential to the other sex, he never allowed them to imagine for a moment that he was aught save the master of the situation. Although some women railed against this part of his make-up, it was not from real irritation, but simply to impress their weaker-minded sisters, and in Norroy's presence they accepted the inevitable without a thought.

And now they were at St. Anthony, and the last move in the game was to be played. Norroy could not view the situation without a slight degree of trepidation, but no trace of this showed in his manner, which was as care-free as ever.

The yacht anchored, the ship's boat was lowered, and into it went the eight guests and the master and mistress of the *Sylph*. Under the lusty strokes of the jackies, it

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shot through the water rapidly, and was soon beached on the clean, white sand. When Van Reyepen had given orders for the men to return as soon as the party reappeared on the beach, the ten people set off under Norroy's leadership and climbed the great, white sand dune before them which led to the path through the forest above.

The parrots and cockatoos shrilled above them, and an occasional monkey chattered volubly to his mate. The trail lay through a jungle of magnolias, orchids and creepers, with sycamores and banana trees waving above and now and then a cocoanut palm. The trees interwove their branches together, and through this the sunlight trickled intermittently.

It was a merry party, the whole ten of them seeming to have given up to childhood frolics, and the women dashed in and out of the thick groves followed by the men, who pelted them with stray orchids, which they twined about their hats. Occasionally a cocoanut palm would be shaken violently, and

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those inexperienced in the eating of the fresh cocoanut spoiled gowns and trousers with the creamy pulp.

Suddenly Page Carewe, who was ahead of the rest, gave a shrill, smothered cry and followed it with a shriek. At the instant it was heard, the whole party rushed ahead, and on a turn of the trail found Page facing a greasy-looking, black-and-tan man in tattered jacket and trousers, who was holding a revolver at her head.

"The scoundrel!" shouted Archie Vanderness, and in a moment he had rushed up. The half-breed showed his yellow teeth viciously and cried out something in Spanish. The cry was answered by the appearance of two more Spanish Caribs, who carried carbines and leveled them at the oncoming party. Somewhat belated, a girl in short, ragged petticoat followed the men. She also carried a revolver.

"No *vamos ustedes*," shouted the first man in "pidgin" Spanish. "You *quierre* no die, you make behave *bueno*. You *sabe*?"

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In spite of the presence of the women, each man of the party uttered an individual "damn," and Yorke Norroy made a grasp for the nearest weapon. Immediately a shot whistled past his ear, and the man whom he had attempted to seize placed a pistol in close proximity to his forehead.

"*Mucho malo hombre,*" he said, indicating himself. "You best make *bueno* talk now."

"No use, Yorke," said Phil Van Reypen, irritably. "See what the scoundrels want. I thought you said the island was uninhabited?"

"So I thought it was," returned Norroy, with some spirit. "These people are, very likely, water-folk."

"Well, who understands Spanish?" asked Van Reypen. "Can anyone speak it well enough to find out just what we'll have to do to get out of this disagreeable predicament?"

There was a dead silence among the party until Norroy spoke. "I understand Spanish

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fairly well," he said. He turned to the man who had threatened him, and inquired, in tones of indignation, as to what the outrage meant.

"We want money," the half-caste replied in Spanish. "If you no have got money, we will take your clothes away—take everything. First we tie up your hands."

Norroy translated.

"I'll be—hanged—if they will," shouted Vanderness. A revolver placed very near to his nose caused him to change his opinion on the subject, and he was the first man to be secured. The half-caste used the thick grass rope of that section, twisted into many strands, and the yachting party soon resembled a party of condemned prisoners headed for the dock.

The women were thoroughbreds. They did not scream nor show any great amount of emotion, but their pale faces and firmly compressed lips showed that, though they did not care to betray it openly, they were filled with alarm of the gravest sort. The

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men reassured them. Phil Van Reypen, who had gotten over his anger, was amused more than anything else, as he knew that none of the party possessed anything of any great value which they were carrying that morning.

Norroy mentally approved little Miss Nugent. It was not hard to see that the girl was fighting against hope. If these scoundrels took away her papers, it would mean a great loss to her—and what assurance had she that they would not? Nevertheless, she tried to smile bravely, but the result was nothing save a sickly distortion of the lips.

They emerged from the jungle to a little clearing. "The out-lodge," Vanderness informed Miss Carewe, as a little, thatched bungalow came into view. It had been used by the club for skinning and smoking their game. The shortest of the three men, who seemed to be the leader, opened the door and stood by with his companions while the yachting party passed into the smoke-begrimed room with the rude settles about.

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Without asking any questions the women sat down and the men eyed their captors defiantly.

The plan of the half-castes was very simple, and Norroy's translation of it told the party only what they knew before. The men were searched first, and watches, fobs, sovereign cases—containing five-dollar gold pieces—scarf-pins, cuff links and other articles of value were made into a little heap in the lap of the half-caste girl, who sat cross-legged in the middle of the room. When each of the five men had contributed his share, he was taken out of the large room into a smaller one adjoining, and the girl went about searching the women, her masculine companions accompanying the men of the party.

“Why, the brutes actually have some delicacy!” exclaimed Page Carewe, in a surprised tone, when the women were left alone with the girl. “Fancy that!” The girl was searching her as she spoke, and had soon stripped her of everything of any possible

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value, including a pair of monogrammed gold-clasped unmentionables. At the last Page began to laugh.

"Now, really, my dear," she said, addressing the girl, "that's unfair! I have on short skirts and ——" She watched the wrinkles in her hose. "Isn't that vexatious? They won't stay up without them."

The girl preserved a stony face. "She doesn't understand," sighed Polly Van Reypen, when she was likewise despoiled. "It's no use. Can't you make her understand that she can take the clasps—but please leave us the elastic?"

Under the influence of the two speakers, the feeling of unrest left the other two, and they began to laugh. It was really a comic situation! Miss Nugent endeavored to join them, but her lips could only form a wan smile.

She was the last to be searched, and the girl had taken everything from her before she discovered the packet of papers. She handled them with a critical eye when she

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had uncovered them, and gazed speculatively on the seals and tape. Miss Nugent gesticulated wildly, and spoke to the girl in three languages, which the half-caste did not appear to understand. Then Miss Nugent tried Italian, with which she had often made Spaniards comprehend.

"They are of no value. Give them to me. They are my private papers. You must not take them."

The girl looked at her distrustfully, and seemed to only partly comprehend. "Why, then, is the senorita so anxious that I shall not have them?" she inquired.

"They are valuable to me," returned Miss Nugent, piteously. "Do not take them. If you will come to the yacht, I will give you more money—one thousand pesos——"

With a look of contempt and an exclamation of "*Mentirosa!*" the girl tossed the papers on the heap. "I will show them to my brothers," she informed Miss Nugent in Spanish.

After allowing the women time to arrange

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their disordered attire—for which she untied their hands one by one, keeping them covered with her revolver and tying each one up again—the girl called “*Venga usted, Emilo,*” and the shortest man entered. She pointed to the pile and spoke to him rapidly in Spanish, he nodding comprehendingly and giving frequent exclamations of “*Bueno!*” “*Muy bueno!*” He picked up the different articles and threw them into a piece of burlap which lay on the floor, afterward tying the bundle into a knot.

Meanwhile the men had been kept in the outer room, and they were full of anxiety concerning the ladies of the party. Norroy continually questioned the short Spaniard regarding them, and he returned fretfully that no harm was meant them. Finally he quitted the room to go to the girl, and the other two followed him five moments later, when he called to them. The men were left alone.

“This is absolutely ridiculous,” said Philippse Van Reypen, with a ghost of a

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smile. "Imagine! The sober twentieth century——"

"They say this used to be a pirate island," put in Tommy Sitcell. "Maybe these are the descendants of the pirates."

"I would like a cigarette," stated Yorke Norroy.

Ned Sturtevant agreed with him.

Vanderness looked sullen. "I don't envy Carson Huntley his neighbors," he growled. "And, besides, anyone would think he would have taken some precautions, knowing that we were coming, and that these scoundrels were roaming about——"

"Perhaps he didn't know it," suggested Yorke Norroy.

"Then he should have," returned Vanderness. "There's no excuse for this sort of thing."

Silence fell upon the party, and they worked desperately at the ropes which bound their hands, but nothing resulted therefrom save chafing of the wrists, and they soon desisted. Norroy had been the on-

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ly man who had not made the attempt, and now his eyes glittered.

"I want a cigarette," he said; "and furthermore, I am going to get one."

"How?" sneered Vanderness.

"With your assistance," returned Norroy, politely. "Kindly insert the toe of your shoe in that knot behind my back."

Vanderness surveyed him contemptuously. "Yorke Norroy, you talk like an idiot. How am I to get my boot-toe into that knot?"

"Pardon me," said Norroy. "I forgot the size of your foot, Archie. I think I shall rejoin our fair companions. Their feet are more adapted to the idea."

He found the women sitting patiently on the settle, in a row, and disconsolate. Miss Nugent's face was buried in her hands.

They greeted Norroy almost rapturously, and in a few words he explained the idea to them. "Suppose you try it, Polly," he suggested. The idea was a perfectly plausible one, and, after working the toe of her boot

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about for some five minutes or so, Norroy could feel the strands parting. He gave a heave of his wrists and put all the strength of his forearm into it, while she thrust her whole shoe into the opening.

"You can get your right hand out now, I think," she said. Norroy adopted the suggestion, and after some little time succeeded in freeing that member, after which the knotted rope fell to the floor. He arose from his knees and rubbed his wrists.

"Now for my benefactress," he said, smiling.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Polly Van Reypen, piously. Norroy freed her by a few deft workings of his long thin fingers, and she stood up and took several deep breaths.

"When you've untied the girls, go out and rescue your husband," smiled Norroy. "I am going hunting for those half-breed scoundrels."

Miss Nugent started up. "Oh, Mr. Norroy," she said, her voice quavering, "they have some papers of mine! Get them for

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me—please get them for me.”

“I will get them, if possible,” he returned, with a peculiar smile, which had significance for him only. He turned to the door. But he did not have to hunt for the half-breeds, for at that instant one of them entered the door. Norroy hurled himself upon him forcibly, and the man fell under the impetus of the shock. In an instant Norroy had wrenched his revolver from him.

“Ah, senor,” he remarked, pleasantly. “Get up and let us see your villainous face. Where are your other friends?”

At the sound of the noise the other captives entered from the adjoining room. “Good for you, Yorke,” said Van Reypen, with gusto. “Ask him what became of my diamond fob.” He advanced and nodded ominously at the now vanquished captor. “Where is it, you scoundrel? Untie my hands, Polly.”

While Mrs. Van Reypen was carrying out the commands of her lord and master, Miss Nugent, now free, rushed forward. “And

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where are my papers? Make him give me my papers! Make him tell you, Mr. Norroy!"

"All in a moment, Miss Nugent," soothed Norroy. He turned to the cowering half-breed. "Where are the things which you have stolen from us?"

"*Aqui, senor,*" muttered the trembling man. "*Aqui.*" He pointed to the bag which he had been carrying, and which had been jolted out of his hand when Norroy sprang upon him.

"Pick up that bag, Tommy," ordered Norroy. Sitcell obeyed instructions and untied the coarse sack of burlap.

"Where are your companions?" inquired Norroy, for the second time. Whimperingly, the man informed him that they had gone to the waterfront to make ready the sailing boat to return to Ularda; that they were fishing folk and had never stolen before. Norroy translated.

"The liar!" commented Van Reypen.

"My papers—where are my papers?"

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wailed Miss Nugent.

"I suppose they are in the bag," answered Norroy. "Wait until Sitcell opens it, Miss Nugent."

"Gather round, folks," said Tommy Sitcell, as the neck of the bag was worked open. "I am going to pour all the contents on this settle." As he spoke he did, and there was an instant rush on the part of the women, and the men were pushed away. In the hurry, several things fell to the floor. All the women drew away except Page Carewe, who still groped on.

"Did anyone lose anything?" inquired Archie Vanderness, blandly, as he picked up a piece of pink gauze elastic with a gold clasp. Page Carewe snatched it and favored the finder with an indignant glance.

"But my papers are not there, Mr. Norroy!" cried Honora Nugent, in a voice of despair. "Please ask him where they are."

"Where are the papers which you took from this lady?" asked Norroy, sternly, pointing to Miss Nugent.

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"I took no papers, senor," returned the half-breed, with a frightened glance.

"He says he took no papers, Miss Nugent," translated Norroy, for the girl's benefit.

"He did not, but *she* did—the girl who searched us. She took them—she took them——"

Norroy turned to the half-caste again and discoursed with him volubly, the other replying with a cringing look and a glance which seemed to show that, had he the power, evil would result to his questioner.

It was with some hesitation that Norroy regarded the expectant countenance of Miss Honora Nugent. "Were the papers very valuable to you, Miss Nugent?" he inquired.

"Valuable? *Valuable?*" she cried, almost on the verge of hysteria. "Yes—oh, yes! Where are they?"

"Brace yourself, Miss Nugent," said Norroy, softly. "I am sorry—this scoundrel shall pay for it—but——"

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“Tell me—tell me——”

“He says that they found no money in the papers, and they were afraid they would do them injury, so they——”

She sprang forward, her arm extended. “Don’t tell me so slowly—what did they do?”

“There was a fire—they dropped them in. Quick—catch her!”

He himself ran forward to the task, and his revolver dropped to the floor. The girl had given vent to a wild cry, had thrown out her hands, and would have fallen prone had not Norroy caught her in his arms. Her head fell over his arm, a dead weight, her hair became unloosened and shrouded her pallid face.

At the same moment the half-breed, who realized that all eyes were now upon the fainting woman, gave a quick glance around, saw that he was not perceived and darted for the door. As he vanished, Archie Vander-ness observed him, and, anxious to distinguish himself in the eyes of Page Carèwe, picked up the revolver and followed in his wake.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE PLANS CAME BACK.

But Archie Vanderness returned a very short space afterward with no prisoner. Instead of that, he was accompanied by a well-groomed young man in golf tweeds and fisherman's boots, who welcomed the party, one and all, with great fervor, and expressed his utmost regrets that such a thing should have happened when they came to visit him. This was Carson Huntley. He gave them an urgent invitation to come to the lodge, but Phil Van Reyphen refused for the party—refused politely and courteously, but nevertheless refused.

“No, Carson,” he answered firmly, “we’ve had enough of your blooming island. Not that it was your fault, but —well, the women are half scared to death, and they need rest and quiet; and their nerves won’t be at ease until they leave this little body of land surrounded by water.”

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He addressed Ned Sturtevant: "Come, we'll have to carry Miss Nugent back to the boat. Poor girl! I wonder what was in those papers."

It was not a subject upon which to discourse, and was soon dropped. Ned Sturtevant, Yorke Norroy and Phil himself took turns at carrying the senseless body of the Nugent girl, and the beach was finally reached. Immediately a boat put out from the yacht.

"I'd advise you to keep a sharp lookout for your head, Carson," warned Vanderness, as they stood on the beach. "Have you ever seen these scoundrels before?"

"Yes—three men and a girl. They came to the island yesterday, and I warned them off with a gun. They embarked, and I thought they had gone. There would have been no danger if you had carried weapons."

"Never you mind about us," said Vanderness, sourly. "We're out of the blessed scrape!" He stepped into the waiting boat, and turned to shake hands perfunctorily.

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with Huntley and with Norroy.

"I'm giving you the slip here, folks," said Norroy. "And I want to wish you luck for the coming voyage and to thank you immensely, Phil and Polly, too, for a very pleasant, profitable trip—except for the last incident."

The good-bys were said and the boat pushed off. Yorke Norroy and Carson Huntley waited on the sand until the smoke began to pour out of the yacht's funnels, and the vessel glided away on her southern course. Norroy waved his hat and Huntley his gun, and many bits of cambric fluttered from the yacht's taffrail.

As Norroy turned to go, Huntley regarded him with a grin. "I should think you did make a profitable voyage, Yorke," he commented.

"Rather," agreed Mr. Norroy.

That evening, after dinner, five men in cool, white drill, and a woman in white ducks sat on the veranda of the little bungalow, which had once been the headquarters

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of the hunt club. The woman was very fair and had light, wheat-straw hair.

"You did," agreed Norroy, referring to a previous statement. "It was a well-acted little comedy—very well acted, indeed. Your stage experience came in well, didn't it, Adelaide?"

The girl laughed. "It did—especially the art of repression. There was one point in which it was invaluable. I——" She ended the sentence in a laugh. "Really, it was too funny, and the funniest part of it is that it wouldn't be quite proper to tell it to men."

"Tell it, anyhow," said Hillam, a rather diminutive man. "I thought you were a Bohemian and scorned conventions."

"Your acting was the best of it all, though," said the girl, addressing Norroy and ignoring Hillam. "When you made that grab for Mr. Turner's gun, it was as good as a comic opera."

"It wasn't comic for some one," remarked Matheson. "To judge from what Hillam says he saw when you were reading

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the riot act to him with his own gun pointed at him—and nothing in it.”

“No,” agreed Norroy, soberly. “And, by the way, who has those papers? I am charged to deliver them, and I want them now.”

Turner handed them to him silently. Norroy placed them in his coat pocket.

“And now for the funny part of it, Adelaide,” he suggested, turning to the girl.

Choking with laughter, Miss Adelaide Hardesty, former stock-company actress, and now secret agent of the state department, told the tale of the half-breed girl, the “unmentionables,” and the hose that would not stay up.

“And I didn’t laugh once—because I didn’t understand English. But it was a strain,” she averred.

The Eagle's Eyrie

CHAPTER I.

THE INDISCRETION OF THE LIBERATOR.

When the envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States to Saxonia received the cryptic message which was handed him by one of the legation servants, he was in good spirits, and he thought well of the world; the fact being that he had just dined, and dined well. He opened the envelope with slight interest, but when he saw that it was in the secret code of the State Department, he thrust it in his pocket and left his guests in the smoking room.

He ascended to his library and puzzled out the first few words. The lines on his face, relaxed by the comfortable after-dinner feeling, came back, creasing his counte-

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nance into many folds until it resembled nothing so much as crumbly parchment, fulvous with age.

“Good heavens!” The words came involuntarily and expressed many things. He touched a button near by with a shaking hand.

“A brandy and soda, Wilhelm,” he said, when a servant appeared. “And you will tell Herr Manley to come up—as soon as he can——”

The door closed, and the envoy extraordinary rested his head on his hands, staring before him with unseeing eyes. A vigorous knock on the door recalled him to the smaller things of life.

“Well?” he demanded, irritably.

Manley, the secretary of legation, a very young man with a preternaturally keen expression of face, entered.

“I think you sent for me,” he half questioned, half asserted.

“Yes—I did,” confirmed the envoy extraordinary. “I did, Manley, I did send—

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—” He was composing himself now and the fingers that tendered the paper to Manley did not tremble. “That is from Grossmark. You know who he is. Our spy at the Saxonian foreign office——”

“Yes, I know,” interrupted Manley. “I know. It’s in crypt, I see. Important?”

The envoy frowned. “You—translate,” he said, slowly. “I have—translated—but I want you——”

The secretary heaved a sigh, remembering the pretty women in the drawing-room. “Oh, very well,” he returned, half sulkily. “Very well.”

He took down the secret-code book and a blank sheet of paper. “Shall I translate as I make it out?” he wished to know.

The envoy nodded; and the secretary read, laboriously:

Jorge Emilio de Legaspi,

“Hello! our South American friend at it again,” he interpolated, with alertness, then continued:

Has been enticed over the Saxonian border by the

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Baroness Aufsborg. He arrived at her castle, the Eagle's Eyrie, this morning, crossing the Austrian border by way of Hohejuch.

Manley whistled abruptly.

"Don't do that," commanded the envoy extraordinary. "Don't!" His tone was almost querulous. "Don't!" he reiterated.

"Oh, very well," responded the secretary. The seriousness of the affair began to dawn on him. "But, excuse me, Mr. Frothingham, this looks pretty bad, doesn't it? De Legaspi will surely be elected president of Andevia in three months—surely——"

"Not surely if he is now at Eagle's Eyrie," said Frothingham, grimly. "Very far from surely—very far from it——"

"Quite so," meditated Manley. "Quite so." Ideas came thick and fast then. "That means," he continued, rapidly prophesying—"that means that Saxonia will get her South American foothold after all, doesn't it? If De Legaspi were elected president of Andevia, he would follow the same tactics as old Fortuno—in fact, he's Fortuno's choice, I believe, isn't he?" As

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Manley questioned, Frothingham nodded gravely. "And, therefore, it will be bad—rather bad—for the United States if De Legaspi isn't elected——"

"It will mean that Mentiroso, already bought by Saxonia, will deed over a certain tract of land to her in payment of Andevia's debts—and that tract will be the very tract to menace the neutrality of the canal. Rather than allow Saxonia to have it, there will be——"

"War," broke in Manley. As the baleful prescience was put into words, the two men eyed one another half apprehensively. "War!" repeated Manley, as though doubting. "War!" he said again, this time with no doubt.

"In other words," Frothingham said, now master of himself, "if De Legaspi is held in Eagle's Eyrie until he can be taken prisoner by the government of Saxonia, trouble between Saxonia and the United States, trouble of the gravest kind, will surely occur." He paused for a moment, regarding

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Manley. Then, with impatience in his voice: "But you haven't finished the message. There's worse to come—much worse to come, and——"

Manley turned to the crypt again:

The baroness has evidently cast some manner of charm over De Legaspi. He is no doubt in love with her. He left Austria secretly, passing over the mountains in the guise of a hunter and posing as Senor Catorro, of Madrid. He has a passport reading in that name. The baroness is a tool of the government, and set on this task deliberately. Unfortunately, I have only now discovered the fact. On De Legaspi's arrival, she notified Schreyer, who has telegraphed De Legaspi's description to every border guard in Saxonia. De Legaspi cannot return to Austria without being arrested. The government knows this and seems to be in no hurry to arrest him; but a file of soldiers from Schmucken, the nearest town to Eagle's Eyrie, forty miles away, will march in that direction to-morrow, while Otto von Roeder, secret agent, leaves for Eagle's Eyrie to-night, reaching there perhaps in two days, as the railroad does not extend to within twenty miles or more of the castle, and some hard mountain climbing must be done to reach it. More later if more can be obtained.

The writer had evidently ceased abruptly in his writing, for the recital of Manley came to a sudden stop. After several moments' silence, Manley spoke.

"I don't see what we can do, Mr. Frothingham," he said, with an attempt at calm.

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"We are bound hand and foot. The only thing we should do is to cable the entire affair directly to the secretary at Washington, and ask his advice. He is fertile in his ideas and——"

"Yes," responded the envoy, but without hope. "That should be done—we must do that——"

"Now, of course?" said the legation secretary, supererogatively. The envoy nodded, drawing some telegraph blanks toward him.

Several hours later a message, sent at urgent rates, found the secretary of state at one of the dinners of the Washington season, and talking with apparent enjoyment to a pretty debutante. Soon after receiving the message, he excused himself and slipped away unobtrusively.

Reading the cablegram, he gave vent to occasional exclamations betokening a perturbed mind. But at the conclusion of the dispatch, he half smiled.

"Yorke Norroy," he murmured. "Just

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the kind of affair in which the fertile scamp excels. And he is in Saxonia now—in Dresig, in fact. His address”—a moment’s search in a private memorandum book and he found the required information—“ ‘Herr Anton von Obermuller, 178 Lebmistrasse, Dresig.’ Not a stone’s throw from the embassy.” The secretary ruminated, his finger making imaginary characters on the cloth-topped table. “Of course, he doesn’t know about this. He’s on quite a different mission. But——”

Rapidly the secretary wrote two cablegrams, both in secret code. One was addressed to Herr Anton von Obermuller, the other to Frothingham, American embassy.

The first directed the recipient to go instantly to the address of the second, confer with the Hon. Mr. Frothingham, and then *act*. The second informed the envoy extraordinary that, in the guise of Anton von Obermuller, he would find a secret agent of the Department of State who could be depended upon to solve the problem, if solv-

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able; Mr. Frothingham was to furnish the Herr von Obermuller with all the information in his possession.

It was near eleven o'clock when the envoy extraordinary had explained the situation to Yorke Norroy, who sat in the embassy library looking very little like the Yorke Norroy known to the society circles of Washington, New York and London. In appearance, the man who sat there resembled a German savant of much learning and a slight disregard for the conventionalities of dress. A bushy beard of a tawny color stood out from his face, and his mustache was short-clipped and upturned. His hair was rather long and his scarf loosely knotted. Frothingham knew Yorke Norroy, man of fashion, quite well; but he failed to connect the soft-mannered exquisite with this Teuton of the Teutons.

On hearing the first general outline of the story, Norroy had said briefly: "This Grossmark knows that Von Roeder is to leave. Send a message to him immediately and find

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out *when*." Norroy was speaking in his native tongue with a broad New York twang.

When the message had been dispatched to the spy of the foreign office, Norroy listened gravely to all that Frothingham had to say. Together they consulted maps and planned the route to be taken in order to reach the Eagle's Eyrie.

Within the hour, an answer had arrived from Grossmark:

Von Roeder goes by the midnight express going to Vienna. He will leave it at Kron, the nearest point to the Aufsberg castle. Kron is a village, not a railroad station. It is only by orders that the express is to stop there.

"Good," commented Yorke Norroy. "It is now less than twenty-five minutes to twelve. I have no time to waste, Mr. Frothingham. I will say good-night to you——"

"But what are you going to do?" asked the envoy.

"Events sometimes shape themselves," returned the secret agent, with the faint suspicion of a smile. "I do not know ex-

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actly. But I shall be on the express which stops at Kron—with Herr von Roeder. Good-night, Mr. Frothingham.”

He made his way out of the house rapidly. To go to his own rooms, to pack a few clothes and a few disguises, took him but little time; and at three minutes to twelve o'clock he passed through the gates of the railway station and swung aboard the Vienna express.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE SIGN OF THE GOLDEN BOAR.

By four o'clock of the afternoon of the following day, the mountains showed in the distance, seemingly firmer figments of mist rising out of the cold blue haze in the distance. As the train dragged itself forward unwillingly, they became more distinct, roseate tipped in the rays of the setting sun.

The darkness shrouded the land in its mantle before their proximity became more visualized, and Norroy reopened the novel which he had been trying to read all day, and perused a few pages of it in the dim lamp-light of the *wagon-lit*. But soon it dropped into his lap unheeded and he lighted a cigarette, gazing speculatively into the darkness outside.

He had sat thus for perhaps an hour when the sharp whistle which indicates a near stoppage of the train came to his ears. He

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looked at his watch. It was nearly seven o'clock. Evidently the whistle indicated that Kron was near. He stopped a passing guard and inquired.

"We stop there but for a moment, to allow a single passenger to disembark. He is on official business. No, herr, it is not customary to stop here. Ah, yes, you are to leave, too. It is fortunate for you, then, else you would have been taken twenty miles further to Hohejuch—which is on the frontier——"

Norroy put the novel into his bag along with several little toilet articles he had taken from it. He snapped the lock and drew on the long ulster, pulling his cloth traveling cap over his eyes. There was a quiver and a shake and the train settled itself down to a crawl, then stopped.

"Kron, herr," came the voice of the guard. Norroy picked up his bag and descended from the train. At the same time, another man, very similarly garbed, stepped from another carriage. The shout of "All off"

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rang out, and the train began to move again, slowly. Norroy looked around him.

He stood on a little declivity along which ran the railroad tracks. Below, in a miniature valley, lights gleamed, and from the black sides of the mountains other tiny specks of fire glinted occasionally.

He noticed that the other man was moving toward him. Presently he stopped within a few paces. "Can you direct me to an inn?" he asked. "An inn, a hotel, any sort of place where shelter for the night may be obtained?"

"I have just left the train myself," replied Norroy. "I do not know of any such place. Perhaps we had best hunt together."

They were speaking in German. Norroy had adopted the heavy pompous manner which is seemingly a part of the make-up of a scientific German. "I am a geologist," he added, slowly. "Of the Royal College of Mines. It was lucky for you that you were on the train with me. I had the royal permit for the train to stop at Kron. It is not a regular station——"

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"That is a coincidence," put in the other. "For such a permit I myself had. I am connected with the government also. My name is Von Roeder."

"Obermuller is mine. Professor Anton von Obermuller," said Norroy, with dignity.

The two men shook hands solemnly. "And now to find an inn," said Norroy. "It seems to me that we had better hunt for one where we see those lights twinkle."

They moved off down the little slope, and, finding a hard-beaten path, stuck to it. They passed the one-storied huts of many peasants in which a single light cast a few rays from cracks and crevices. A man came from the other direction. Norroy stopped him.

"Can you direct us to an inn?" he asked. The peasant, unaccustomed to the sound of the voices of the nobility, shrank back. It was some moments before he could respond coherently, babbling as he did in a queer patois which partook of Slav, Magyar, and Teuton, all rolled into one.

"I will show you, *freiherr*s," he said, in

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a final intelligible effort.

He started back the way he had come, cutting away from the lights and rounding the slope of a hill, where a house, larger than those they had before seen, stood out with lights in all of its three stories.

Norroy tossed the peasant a florin and stepped up to the double-barred door of the inn; but the man, in an ecstasy of gratefulness, was before him, knocking loudly and calling out in a shrill tone that two of the great ones of the earth had arrived. As he shouted, the bars were taken down from the inside and the doors flung open. Their guide, with many bows, withdrew, and the two government men stepped within the lighted space.

It might have been the seventeenth century for all the material change that had occurred in this old roadhouse. The ceiling was low and heavily raftered while from it hung hams, legs of mutton and other meats in the slow process of dry-curing. Several hogsheads and barrels, fitted with

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taps, stood in one corner, and bottles, cobwebby and dusty, were arranged on shelves near the fireplace. The furniture was rough and cut from undressed wood—a number of heavy tables, and straight-backed, straight-seated chairs.

A bright blaze from the fireplace showed huge burning logs, casting a cheerful, subdued glow over the quaint old place, while several lanterns, hung from the rafters, sputtered smokily, but added little to the light.

In one corner at a table sat four or five mountaineers in their rude attire, who had ceased guzzling their beer to stare in open-eyed astonishment at the newcomers. The landlord himself, a small, spare man with piggish eyes, was nearly tied in a double knot, so low was he endeavoring to make his bow.

“Welcome, *freiherrs*,” he murmured, obsequiously. “Welcome. Ah! that I should have such a humble place in which to make the *freiherrs* welcome—ah———”

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"Come, come, my good man!" cut in Norroy. "That is not to the point. It is cold without. Therefore, close your door. We have just left the train, journeying from Dresig, and we are hungry. Prepare us some food—your best. And wine—your best—you understand?"

"It shall be so, *freiherrs*," bowed the landlord again. He pulled them a table to the fireplace and two chairs, assisting them to remove their coats and outer wrappings, and taking their hand baggage. His demeanor altered considerably, however, when he approached the mountaineers in the corner.

"You cannot remain here now," he said, with much loftiness. "The *freiherrs* cannot be troubled by the sight of the base born. Come again to-morrow night, good fellows, but to-night—you see it is impossible you should stay."

The mountaineers did not protest. The days of the feudal system were almost present in that remote region, and they knew

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nothing save that they must obey the will of those born to higher things than they. So the mountaineers quitted the room quietly, leaving Norroy and Von Roeder alone before the great blaze.

"A quaint old place," commented Norroy, as the two sat drinking from the huge stone mugs which the landlord had brought them. "That is all we wish to drink now, landlord. Prepare the food. We are hungry."

The landlord bowed again and made off. "Yes," repeated Norroy. "A quaint old place. I shall enjoy the atmosphere of mediæval times while unearthing the traces of the neolithic age. I shall no doubt make this my headquarters——"

Von Roeder had been eying the supposed Obermuller keenly; and was now satisfied from Norroy's make-up and general appearance that there was no doubt that he was exactly what he had represented himself to be.

"Yes," he agreed, without enthusiasm.

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"But while the atmosphere may be what you may like, it is rather hard to do without one's bath—and kindred comforts which go with effete civilization."

"True, true," answered Norroy. "True. But the atmosphere——"

"And, after all, it is a mere mock atmosphere," interrupted Von Roeder, anxious to rid himself of the thoughts that had come. "A cross between civilization and semi-barbarism. There is nothing save the shell. If one were sure that it were necessary to be on his guard for his life; if one felt that a duel was imminent on the slightest provocation—something of the shoddy melodrama of old which to-day's novelists call romance—then perhaps the atmosphere might appeal——"

Norroy's eyes twinkled for the moment. "Then you have no fear of any such circumstances? I was not so sure. They told me in Dresig that this place was more or less lawless. That it had no laws save those propounded by the master of Eagle's

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Eyrie."

"Mistress," corrected Von Roeder. "The Baroness Aufsberg is the last of her line."

"Well, mistress, then. Is there not something of romance in that?—a woman living in a castle overlooking the valley, who rules with the high justice and the low; whose turret windows look out on both Saxonia and Austria. The Lady of the Marches—how is that? It sounds like a title from our romancists, does it not?"

But the spirit of romance had evidently not come to Von Roeder. "*Ach!*" he remarked, with some contempt. "What is she? She rules no one. She is like some obscure justice, that is all. She dare not sentence a man to death or imprisonment for life; nothing serious can be tried before her. No, herr professor, I see no romance in the judgment of a few sheep stealers and cattle thieves."

Norroy offered his cigarette case and the men lighted cigarettes. Out of the tail of his eye, Norroy watched Von Roeder. It was

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perfectly evident that this astute gentleman was not to be pumped through indirection. But there was something still that Norroy felt that he must learn before proceeding, and his next spoken words were a bait to catch the unwary.

“Our bags!” he ejaculated, suddenly. “Where has that old scoundrel taken them? I have in mine many valuable things——”

He broke off short and cast a look at Von Roeder; the secret agent of Saxonia was fumbling in his coat pocket. Evidently what he found there reassured him, for his composure returned.

“No fear, I dare say,” said Von Roeder. “He’ll hardly——” He looked around. “Ah! there they are!” He pointed to a seat built on one side of the fireplace on which rested the effects of the two men.

“Ah, yes!” agreed Norroy. “Quite so. Thank you, Herr von Roeder.” But had the Saxonian secret agent known the exact thing for which Norroy was thanking him, his self-satisfied smile would have fled from

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his face.

It was an old and often-proved theory of Norroy that in the event of sudden danger a person's hands will go instinctively to the part of the person on which is hidden the most valuable article in his possession. At that time, Norroy was perfectly sure that the most valuable article in Von Roeder's possession was the warrant for the arrest of De Legaspi. And Von Roeder had felt within his upper coat pocket!

"I dare say I shall meet this Baroness Aufsberg," continued Norroy, after a few moments spent in introspection. "I shall, no doubt, be forced to present myself to her with my papers before I shall be allowed to roam about her territory undisturbed. You do not chance to know her, do you, Herr von Roeder?"

"No," returned Von Roeder. "I am to make her acquaintance to-morrow." He spoke cautiously and laboriously, as though not quite sure of himself. "I am a government surveyor," he explained, with clumsy

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mendacity. "I am to make surveys for the new—railroad."

Norroy nodded gravely. "I understand. Then we shall no doubt journey there together to-morrow. Is it far from here?"

"A matter of four hours' journey, I have been told. One makes it on horseback. But I am starting very early in the morning, herr professor. At dawn, in fact. Perhaps you do not care to rise at that hour——"

"No," agreed Norroy. "No, that is too early for me, Herr von Roeder. Then you will no doubt be there when I arrive. However, we shall see one another again, I have no doubt." Norroy raised the tankard and filled the mugs again with the frothy beer. "Ah! see," he exclaimed suddenly. "Is not that a curious play of the lights on yonder wall?"

He pointed to a place back of Von Roeder. The secret agent turned instinctively. At the same moment, Norroy's hand shot over the secret agent's mug of beer and a thin line of white powder trickled from an open-

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ed paper into the beer mug. Norroy quickly withdrew the hand as Von Roeder faced him again.

"Yes—it is almost realistic," agreed the secret agent. "If you talk to me long, professor, you will have me romantic also. Well, here's to romance!"

He raised his mug and drained it. Then set it down, tasting with a wry face.

"That is bad beer," he affirmed. "Very bad beer. Do you not think so, herr professor?"

"It has a queer, bitter taste," agreed the American. "Yes, that is true." He offered Von Roeder another cigarette. "But we cannot expect better in such a place."

Von Roeder refused the cigarette. "No," he said, resting his head on one hand. "I do not care for another now. I do not care for another—now——" He put up the other hand and his head sank between the two palms.

Norroy flicked an ash from his cigarette and looked into the glowing fire. The light

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striking his face on the off side gave it a peculiarly saturnine look. Von Roeder's eyes, heavy with slumber desire, caught the effect.

"You look like——" Norroy turned to him with a smile; but the effect was only intensified, the face contorted into grimness. "You look like," repeated Von Roeder again, "a Faustus devil, professor—a Faustus devil——"

Norroy puffed the cigarette tranquilly. "That is hardly complimentary to me, Herr von Roeder," he said. "I did not know that I possessed any physical attributes entitling me to your description——"

"A Faustus devil—a Faustus devil!" repeated Von Roeder. His eyes were closed now and he was mumbling inconsequential things—mere jumbles of words that had no connected meaning. "Baroness Aufsberg—Mephistopheles, avaunt!—so Schreyer—and—Marguerite——" Suddenly he began to hum "Soldiers' Song" from Gounod's greatest opera. "Ha, ha, ha, haha, haha, haha," he crooned. Norroy lighted another

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cigarette on the butt of the one he held in his hand.

Von Roeder had ceased humming. He opened his eyes with an effort—a fight of will against the soporific influence of the drug. “So, herr professor, you don’t like—Faustus devil?” he inquired, with a pugnacious intonation. “Well, you are—Faustus devil. Geologist? Liar! liar! liar!” He rose to his feet as he almost shouted the words and his hand went to his coat pocket. But the coherency, wrested from the deadened faculties, now paid the penalty, and the man collapsed in the chair limply.

Norroy took the cigarette from his mouth and held it between the thin fingers of his left hand. His right went in the direction of Von Roeder’s coat and into the pocket, from which the American drew out a blue envelope with the water-mark of the Saxonia foreign office upon it. He examined it cursorily, and his indefinitely colored eyes lighted up for a moment, then became as immutable as ever.

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He put the cigarette between his lips again and both hands made a minute search of the Saxonian's pockets. Several other papers came to view, one of which Norroy retained—a passport. He replaced the others and sat back in his chair as the sound of approaching footsteps warned him of the near presence of some one.

It was the landlord who entered with the food, smoking hot. He placed the various platters on the table, and a boy following him set several bottles of wine on the floor beside Norroy. The American looked up without seeming interest.

“Oh, landlord!” he said. “My friend has fallen asleep. He is very weary and I do not wish to awaken him. Send in several of your servants and have them put him to bed. It does not matter with regard to his share of the food. Here!” He tossed the man a five-mark coin.

“Ah! your excellency, your excellency,” bowed the landlord, overcome. The cost of the food was hardly half a mark. He re-

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tired from the room and called for his sons, two burly lads, who, propping the limp Saxonian between them, carried him out of the room. Norroy, meanwhile, was eating of the fare which had been set before him.

“Landlord!” he said, imperatively. The man drew closer and listened attentively. It was well to listen to this open-handed *freiherr*.

“I journey to the Aufsberg castle to-night—the Eagle’s Eyrie, you understand?” He paused for a moment.

“To-night?” queried the landlord, incredulously. “To-night, *freiherr*?”

“To-night,” affirmed Norroy, with decision. “And you must find me a guide and a horse. The journey is hardly more than four hours, I believe.”

“Four, *freiherr*, four?” The landlord smiled. “The distance is close upon twenty miles. And it is over a rough road, *freiherr*. Six hours, perhaps seven, it may be eight—”

Norroy’s look was impatient. “That is

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as it is," he rejoined. "I journey there to-night. I must have a guide and a horse. The guide also must have a horse. Find the horses and the man, and you shall have another five marks, landlord."

The landlord's smile was broad and comprehensive. "It shall be as the *freiherr* says," he agreed, subserviently. "My son, Karl, my eldest born, shall be your guide. The horses he will secure. All shall be ready when the *freiherr* says."

"In half an hour, then," returned Norroy. "Meanwhile I will eat of your most excellent fare, landlord."

A little later, the American pushed back the plates from him, and looked at the chair in which Von Roeder had sat a little time before.

"No romance, eh?" His smile was cold. "No fear of robbery—nothing of the sort, eh?" Again he smiled less frigidly. He was tolerably well pleased with the night's work. "And that powder is always good for a sleep of forty-eight hours—forty-eight

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hours." Norroy ruminated. "Much may happen in forty-eight hours. Much!" He took the paper from the blue envelope and unfolded it. "His imperial majesty's commission—Senor Catorro—anarchist—held by the Baroness von Aufsberg—do hereby relegate to our trustworthy servant, Otto von Roeder, authority to——"

Norroy broke off from his perusal of the document. "These Saxonians will never learn," he announced to the flames. "They will never learn that it is unsafe to give papers of this sort. I have never held a written commission. No fear of the secretary doing that." He gazed at the blue paper speculatively, then thrust it back into its envelope.

"The soldiers leave Schmucken to-morrow at eight in the morning." He was referring to his notebook in which were inscribed many cabalistic-like characters. "Leaving Schmucken at eight." He referred again to some figures and trigonometrical designs. "They will arrive at Aufsberg

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about eleven.”

He replaced the notebook in his pocket. “While I leave Kron at”—he consulted his watch—“eight-thirty, arriving at Aufsberg at least by dawn——”

He smiled contentedly and lighted another cigarette. “So Von Roeder thinks there is no romance left.” His smile became almost a laugh. “Perhaps he’s right. I have no doubt he’ll see little romance in the affair. And yet it doesn’t differ greatly from what our swashbuckling ancestors went through, according to history. Ah—well!” He stretched himself, yawned and arose. “The powder is good for forty-eight hours—forty-eight——”

He opened his traveling bag and drew out a pair of riding breeches and leather puttees. Standing in the shadow of the fireplace, he drew off his trousers and tossed them on a settle, after which he drew on the brown breeches, buttoned them down the legs and buckled on the puttees.

“Landlord!” he called. He folded the

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trousers and placed them in the bag, which he locked.

"Yes, *freiherr*," answered the landlord, appearing at the head of the stairs. "Karl is near to being ready. It will be but little time before he joins you."

Norroy transferred a revolver from his coat pocket to his breeches, and toyed with a short riding crop.

"No romance!" he laughed again.

CHAPTER III.

THE BETRAYAL.

“There, *freiherr*,” said the boy Karl. “There is Castle Aufsberg. They call it the Eagle’s Eyrie hereabouts,” he added, explanatorily.

The dawn had come hours before. The sun was shining brilliantly upon the mountain peaks, converting their snowy crests into veritable similitudes of molten silver. A mile or two in the distance, just visible upon the turning of the path, a mass of whitish-gray stone stood out upon a spur of the mountain like a picture of the olden time. It was all there; no detail was missing; the towers, turrets, battlements, moat, draw-bridge and all; and the huge pile of masonry stood out aggressively, as though menacing those who approached.

Norroy glanced at his watch. It was

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nearly nine o'clock. For close upon twelve hours, through cold, wind and sleet, these two had ridden. Norroy was chilled to the bone, and his ulster soaked with the drizzle of overnight. Their horses limped painfully.

"Well, we must push on, Karl," he said, subduing his weariness. "When we get there, we shall have all the rest that we need; and warmth also." He shivered in the cold rush of wind. "We must put the horses to it. Come, boy!"

It was necessary to lay the whips over the heads of the beasts before they could be urged to pull their tired limbs over the rocky road. They moved forward slowly.

Close upon an hour later, they rode across the drawbridge, which was down, and into the courtyard of the old castle. A liveried retainer came forward to hold their horses.

"You will see that this youth has food and a change of clothes," said Norroy to the groom. "Take him into the servants' quarters."

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"It shall be done," said a second man, who had just come up. He also was in livery which, albeit somewhat frayed, had once been expensive. Norroy surmised, quite rightly, that he was the major-domo.

"The Herr Otto von Roeder to see the baroness," he said, curtly.

The major-domo bowed. "If the *freiherr* will follow me," he said, with respect.

Norroy walked wearily across the paved courtyard and up the great stone steps of the main entrance, the doors of which were thrown open with great promptitude at a sharp knock from the major-domo. The American passed into a stone hall, arched loftily, and followed the major-domo along its gloomy length to a second flight of stairs, broad, and of oak, ornamented with balustrades carved quaintly, a stone figure holding aloft a torch appearing in regular intervals on either side. The magnitude of the castle appalled him for the moment.

But the room into which he was ushered might have been one in the city residence of

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any European of moderate wealth. It was grotesquely tapestried and wainscoted, it is true, but the little tables here and there holding vases of flowers, books and trifling ornaments, made Norroy more at ease. Here were signs of recent occupancy in the opened volumes and the half-finished needle-work. The oriel windows were not even stained and the sun came brightly through them.

“Madame’s private reception room,” the major-domo informed him. “I will now call madame.”

Observing a hand mirror on one of the tables, Norroy drew out his pocket-handkerchief and began to remove from his countenance the traces of the wind and weather of the night. He threw off his ulster and smoothed his hair. His stock collar was fortunately of a neutral shade and did not show the dirt; this he arranged to his satisfaction and thrust the pin more securely in place.

A few moments later, he heard the unmistakable *frou-frou* of skirts in the hallway, and, picking up a book, pretended to be

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immersed in its contents.

“Herr von Roeder!”

Norroy placed the book on a near-by table, rose and bowed to a rather comely woman in gray who had just entered. There was something alluring, he admitted, about the soft, yellow hair, something appealing about the mouth, and the blue eyes looked as though they might, at will, become soft and melting. But as she spoke, they were as hard and cold as Norroy's own.

“Madame?” he half questioned.

“I understood that you were to come, Herr von Roeder. Won't you sit down?” She motioned him to a chair near which she stood and he followed her action.

“You come at a strange hour,” she pursued. “I understood the message from Count Schreyer to read that you would not arrive until late this afternoon. That was the reason the soldiers were ordered from Schmucken.”

He nodded. “I have traveled all night,” he replied. “I saw no need of chopping the

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journey. Yes, it was rather a useless thing to send the soldiers—although precautionary. But I rather fancy, baroness, that I shall be able to manage without the aid of the military. Or even of your household.”

Her lip curved petulantly. “Perhaps you underestimate your man, Herr von Roeder,” she said. “I can assure you he is not easy to handle. That is why I asked for the soldiers. I thought they would be needed on the journey between here and Kron. After you have reached the train, all will be simple enough.”

Norroy nodded again. “May I smoke? Thank you.” He lighted a cigarette. “I presume that De Legaspi is here now—in the castle——”

“We breakfasted together—an hour ago,” she returned. “And he has gone off to gather snow flowers. He knows how much I care for flowers—and he——” She suddenly realized what she was saying, and noted the sneer on Norroy’s lip.

“You must care greatly for him, ma-

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dame," he said, mockingly. She flushed. "But my orders are to be quick. I cannot even stop here to change my clothes——" He pulled the blue envelope from his pocket. "There is my commission, baroness."

She glanced at it carelessly, then handed it back. "Oh, yes, I knew of that. But you do not ask me how I managed to get this man across the border."

Norroy's lip curled slightly. "No, I do not," he returned. "I have been a secret agent for some time, baroness, and I know the use that women are in the profession—especially so when they are beautiful as you are. But we waste time. If you will oblige me, please ring for a servant and have him bring this De Legaspi here."

The look which the woman vouchsafed Norroy was hardly one which would have encouraged a lover, for Norroy's tone was taunting and full of bitter courtesy. She realized that in this man's estimation she stood very low indeed, and that her rank did not save her in the slightest with him. Re-

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pressing the impulsive reply that sprang to her lips, she arose and touched the button. Norroy looked at his watch. It was nearing eleven o'clock. The soldiers were due to arrive by that time.

Norroy picked up the book which he had been perusing and allowed his eyes to wander over the printed pages, turning leaf after leaf and apparently absorbed, but really not reading a word. The baroness followed his example and they sat silent for the better part of half an hour, at the end of which time a servant knocked.

"The Herr Legaspi has returned, madame," he said, bowing very low. "He is in the hall and waiting——"

"Tell him to come here," she said, curtly.

The servant retired, and a moment later a man of some thirty-seven or eight years, with glossy black hair tinged with gray and the oval, olive-skinned face of one of the Latin races, entered. He was rather a good-looking man, Norroy thought, and, looking at the firm jaw, he wondered that he could

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have been so easily made the fool.

He came in almost impetuously. "Elsa," he began, coming forward with hands outstretched. Then he noted Norroy and stopped. The men inspected one another coldly, and Norroy's right hand, which he held behind his back, trembled slightly.

"Senor Emilio de Legaspi?" queried Norroy.

The South American bowed.

The hand behind the back came into view holding a small Remington. "You are my prisoner, senor," said Norroy. "I am an agent of the Saxonian foreign office. You might have been well aware of your danger in crossing Saxonia's border."

He kept his eyes steadily on the Andevian. De Legaspi was stunned. He tried to smile. Then he turned to the baroness, who stood, hard and cold, looking toward the window.

"You—Elsa—you will——" She gazed at him impassively, and the man read in her eyes what he was afraid to believe. "You—you—Elsa—ah, God!"

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For a moment he stood with bowed head; then he looked again toward Norroy. The Remington still covered him squarely.

"Will you give me your parole not to attempt escape?" queried Norroy. "Otherwise, I shall be forced to handcuff you—which I do not care to do."

The Andevian looked around for a moment, hopelessly. "You know that this is an outrage, senor," he commented, compressing his lips in his endeavor to show no emotion. "You know that Saxonia can be made to answer for this."

"Quite true, senor," returned Norroy. "But no one knows that you came over the mountains from Austria. You came disguised. You came with a false passport. News does not leak out of Saxonia prisons, senor."

The man understood and gave vent to a low, hoarse cry. "A prisoner—for life—that is what you mean. My parole! My parole! No, I shall give you no parole—no ——" He had darted for the door, but Nor-

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roy, ever-watchful, caught his hands, dropping the revolver as he did so. The next moment the Andevian's wrists were encircled by a steel ring which Norroy had snapped upon him.

The American stepped back and picked up the revolver, which he replaced in his pocket. "I am sorry to do this, senor," he said, courteously. "But I have no choice."

But the Andevian was not paying attention. He was looking at the woman. "Elsa!" he said, slowly. "Elsa! I never before knew how black a woman's heart could be. God forgive me, I never knew."

From the woman there came not a sign. She had seated herself and was gazing out of a near-by window, her face set in hard lines, and the beauty gone out of it with the ashen hue that overspread it.

For a moment there was silence; then came a knock on the door.

"Enter," commanded the baroness.

A servant obeyed the command. "Soldiers have arrived from Schmucken, ma-

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dame," he said. "Their captain wishes to have an audience."

"Show him in," said the baroness, dully.

The servant disappeared, to come into sight again announcing: "Lieutenant Albrecht von Moser."

The young soldier strode forward, his cap in his hand, clicking his heels together and bowing at the sight of the baroness.

"You know why I have come, baroness," he said. "I have orders to arrest a certain man named Catorro, who is said to be here."

"That, lieutenant," smiled Norroy, stepping forward, "is not possible."

The lieutenant eyed him suspiciously, then arrogantly. One glance at Norroy, in his disguise, was enough to show the lieutenant that he belonged to neither the nobility nor military. Therefore, being of the military, Lieutenant von Moser had the right to be condescending.

"What do you mean, my good fellow?" he wished to know.

Norroy laughed shortly. "I mean that

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he has already surrendered to me; and, as your superior, I am entitled to a salute, sir. I am Captain Otto von Roeder, lieutenant, and Catorro, or Legaspi, is my prisoner. Salute, sir."

"Where is your commission? I don't know you. I can't take your word, you know." The lieutenant was visibly disquieted.

Norroy handed him the paper. Von Moser glanced at it. Then, clicking his heels together, he gave the document back to Norroy, and brought his hand to the side of his head in grave salute.

"Quite so, captain," he said. "I apologize. Have you any need for me or for my men?"

"None whatever," replied Norroy. "There is the prisoner." He pointed to the manacled Legaspi. "You see, I am quite able to manage him. You and your men may return to Schmucken, lieutenant."

CHAPTER IV.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO AUSTRIA.

A short while after the soldiers disappeared over the slope of the mountains, returning to their post at Schmucken, a little cavalcade, composed of Yorke Norroy, Emilio de Legaspi, and Karl, the landlord's son, struck off the main road toward Kron, toward which they had apparently started when they left the Castle of Aufsberg.

"Karl, boy," said Norroy, in German, "we are not going back to Kron. We must cut off here and make our way toward the Saxonian frontier. We are going into Austria, you understand."

The boy did not question nor did he seem surprised. It was his duty to obey. "I know a road, *freiherr*. It is past the frontier guard at Erckberg. There is no other way save by Hohejuch, which is longer."

"By Erckberg, then," said Norroy, briefly,

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and he fell back abreast with Legaspi, who was finding some trouble in holding the bridle reins with his manacled hands. Norroy leaned over the saddle, fitted a tiny key in the lock, and unsnapped the manacles.

"No, no," he disclaimed. "I don't ask you for your parole. I only ask you not to be a fool again, Senor de Legaspi. You are a free man."

"What—what?" stammered the Andevian. "Jesting again, senor?"

Norroy drew a revolver from his pocket and handed it to the Andevian. "You may judge from that whether I jest or not. It is loaded. Oh! I can understand, senor, that it is strange to you; but it can be no stranger than your conduct has been to me. I am an agent of the government of the United States, senor, sent to pull you out of the trap which you managed to dig for yourself. You have been a fool!"

"I do not understand," gasped the Andevian. "I do not understand."

As briefly as the incidents made it possible,

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Yorke Norroy narrated the tale. At its conclusion, he interrupted the Andevian instantly upon that gentleman beginning fervid protestations of undying gratitude.

“Rather let us say, Senor de Legaspi, that one who is to be the chief executive of Andevia had best preserve his wits to such an extent as to fall into no more traps of the sort set by pretty women. I have pulled you out of this one, at the expense of the United States, for I have been forced to leave undiscovered certain matters which called me to Dresig.”

The Andevian twisted his thin fingers together. “Ah, senor, how can I ever atone?”

“By never making another blunder of the sort,” replied Norroy. “Pretty women are everywhere used by nations as diplomatic tools, and the prettier and the more fascinating they are, the more dangerous. You can atone by not letting another make a fool of you. Also, you will do well to remember that the United States kept you from lifelong imprisonment in a Saxonian fort; that you

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can remember when you come to be president of Andevia."

"But you, senor?" cried the Andevian, earnestly. "How can I ever repay you?"

"The United States pays me for this work," cut in Norroy, coldly. "But we are not yet out of the woods, Senor Legaspi. Karl, halt the horse, and remain where you are for a moment or so. Do not look behind you."

Obediently, the young Saxonian pulled in his horse and sat motionless in the saddle. From the dispatch bag, which he carried slung over his shoulder, Norroy pulled a wig of brown hair, and a mustache of the same variety. Leaning over in his saddle, he adjusted these to the face of Legaspi. With a steady hand, he applied a camel's-hair brush to the eyebrows and lashes of the Andevian, and, with different dyes and paints, taken from various compartments of the bag, so altered that gentleman's countenance that in it Legaspi saw no traces of himself when shown the hand mirror.

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“And here,” concluded Norroy, after replacing the various articles in the bag, “is the pass of one Anton von Obermuller, which you will present when questioned by the officials on the frontier.”

“But for yourself, senor?”

“I have the passport of one Otto von Roeder,” said Norroy, with a smile.

“On government business, lieutenant,” said Norroy, with a portentous frown, when the file of soldiers closed around him at the mountain pass of Erckberg. A few paces away lay Austria, and between it and the three stood the soldiers. Norroy handed them his passport.

“Ah! Otto von Roeder—Captain von Roeder, is it not?” The lieutenant drew back and saluted. “My name is Durer. We have heard much of the famous Otto von Roeder here, captain. And the other gentleman?”

“My *confrere*, Herr von Obermuller,” explained Norroy. Legaspi handed them the pass silently. He was afraid to speak in his faulty German, and Norroy had bidden him

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not to do so.

“Quite right—quite right,” agreed the lieutenant. “And so you go to Austria, gentlemen? I wish you a very pleasant journey.” He drew back, and saluted again. The soldiers raised their carbines, and Norroy, Legaspi and the boy, Karl, passed over the frontier and into Austria, where Legaspi was beyond the reach of Saxonian law.

When the guards had been left far behind, Norroy turned abruptly to Legaspi. “I’ll tell you of something you may do,” he said, and there was a tinge of kindness in his voice. “This boy Karl here has been your means of salvation. Had it not been for him, I could never have threaded the mountain passes. Had it not been for his silence at the frontier, we should both have been imprisoned. Now, as you know, this boy can never return to his own country. So take him with you, Legaspi; take him with you to Andevia, and give him a position of trust—but give him an education first. You will

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do this? Thank you!"

And so a man of affairs was made from a peasant lad; a man whom they say will one day rule Andevia. But that is prophecy with which we have nothing to do.

Norroy returned to Washington some three weeks later, just in time to act as master of ceremonies in the fourth cotillion of the season.

A Yankee Knight Errant

CHAPTER I.

THE "SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE."

*Here, there, devil-may-care, where my sword
may lead, I'll follow,*

*Honor's crown awaits the brave, fortune
mocks the timid knave.*

*Biff! Bang! let the steel clang, words with-
out the deeds are hollow.*

*Sword in hand, at love's command, I'll do
or die!*

Holforness had picked up a copy of this song somewhere, and so constantly had he sung it since that time that his fellows had gradually learned it, adopting it for their slogan. There were five men who sang the ditty, three Americans and two Englishmen, and they sat in the taproom of the Salambo,

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Port Arthur's hostelry most beloved by the Anglo-Saxon.

Gerald Holforness was certainly not sober, neither were his companions, else they would not have continued to sing, seeing that it much displeased the other occupants of the cafe. To tell the truth, Russian vodka was not a fit drink for Mr. Holforness and his *confreres*. Their beverage should have been beer.

The sixth man at the table was a nondescript, when it came to a matter of determining his nationality. The closely clipped Vandyke beard which he wore and the curling mustache might have inclined one to the belief that he was a Frenchman. But somehow this impression did not last when his indefinitely colored eyes were turned on the spectator. He was slender, almost boyish, in the lines of his figure, but his shoulders were square and aggressive. Beneath the hair on his face, the thin lips and firm jaw showed a spirit which was almost bulldog-gish, yet his slim, daintily manicured, almost

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womanish fingers, and high-arched instep within high-heeled tan riding boots seemed marvelously out of the drawing.

He was attired in a uniform of khaki serge, cut after the latest London fashion plates for his majesty's service, and the Norfolk belt encircled a waist so slim that a woman might have envied it. In one hand he carried a riding crop of ebony, trimmed with silver, with which he occasionally flicked small particles of dust from his baggy breeches.

"Oh! I say," he broke in, when Holforness had chanted the song for the fourth time. "Oh! I say, old chap, cut that blooming noise, will you?"

Holforness turned on him indignantly. "Inten' t'sing shong musher please," he retorted, with drunken dignity. "I'm Gerald Holfornesh, soldier' fortune, Missher Warrendell. I'm soldier' fortune. Whash say?"

"I say you're a howling ass," retorted the man called Warrendell, rising. "A howling ass, and you make entirely too much

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noise. Soldier of fortune— pooh!”

“Missher Warrendell,” continued Holforness, retaining his balance by a nice calculation of equilibrium. “Very goodsh; you’re Britishersh like m’self, else you couldn’t shaysh things to me. I’m soldier’fortune, Missher Warrendell, an’ I fightsh man f’r less’n that.”

Maddison, the American correspondent, raised his glass with an unsteady hand. “Here’s to England!” he shouted. “Here’s to England!”

Holforness seized his own glass. “Here’s to United Shates, old fellowsh, here’s to England, United Shates, and—Japan!”

“Well, of all the bloody fools!” commented Warrendell.

The Russian officers who were drinking near by rose to their feet and cast threatening glances at the bold group that dared mouth their enemy’s name within the very portals of Russian domination. Although it was not yet war time, the feeling was bitter, as might have been expected.

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Warrendell moved toward them, and spoke in French. "They are drunk, *messieurs*," he explained, courteously.

"An excess of wine often betokens the true state of mind," returned the lieutenant of artillery whom he addressed. "But it is as you say, they are drunk. Otherwise I myself would hold them to account. Will you not drink with us, M. Warrendell?"

Warrendell refused politely. "I have taken too much already," he said. "My compatriots are not wise men in the matter of vodka. And, besides, I must have a clear head for my journey to-morrow."

"You are leaving us?" queried a major of infantry.

"I go to Chefoo by the *Loongsang* at three o'clock to-morrow morning. She sails with the tide. I must be aboard her ere midnight."

He shook hands with them, and went out, walking down the Pushkin Ulitze toward the Bund. He was perfectly well aware of the fact that the Russians knew beforehand

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that he was leaving the Manchurian fortress that day, else he would not have told them. Previous experience with the secret service of the czar had taught him that but little was concealed from the imperial Russian police.

He was glad that his month's stay in Port Arthur was coming to an end. It had been very distasteful to him, used as he was to trickiness, deception, and treachery. But before he had been working for his own country. Now he was laboring in the cause of the little brown men whom he disliked—disliked extremely. He was almost sorry that his plans had been consummated.

To those who knew Yorke Norroy to be a diplomatic agent, little surprise would have been expressed if this apparently dyed-in-the-wool Britisher with the Georgian accent, monocle and Picadilly clothes would have disclosed his true identity. For Cecil Warrendell was only another of the many aliases, and the get-up a new disguise, used for the purpose of cloaking the real man from the too curious public.

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Norroy was a man of few scruples when engaged in his chosen work; but up to this time he had not served any country other than his own. Had he been engaged in the same work which now occupied him for the state department of his native land, he would have felt no compunction whatever in doing exactly what had been his chief concern since he had been in Port Arthur. As it was, he felt that he had no excuse.

But, after all, it was the fault of the minister to Japan! What right had he to reveal Norroy without disguise to the mikado's ministers? None whatever, argued the secret agent.

Briefly, it had all come about in this manner: Norroy had just carried through a diplomatic deal in Korea which had resulted in the benefit of the United States and, incidentally, Japan. Through it all, the minister had known him as Robert Evans, and the said Evans had looked no more like Yorke Norroy than did Cecil Warrendell. After the thing had been over, Mr. Robert

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Evans had been requested to hold a consultation with Marquis Ito.

There were many Poles in Port Arthur, Poles of noble birth, and principally officers of the army and marine. Ito wanted a man who could arrange with these men to obtain a set of plans and figures relative to the fortifications, armament, food supply, mines, and other things concerning the Manchurian fortress. Vague hints had been brought to Ito's ears that these Poles were anxious to see the downfall of Port Arthur, and would, in return for grants and privileges in the future, aid the Japanese in every way to compass the possession of the city by the men of Nippon.

Mr. Robert Evans spoke Russian, Polish and Chinese, incidentally French. There were few men who could pass muster in such an array of languages, even among the best linguists of the Japanese secret service. But for a Jap to chaffer with these men would be impossible, for every Yamato who entered any Manchurian town was watched as

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keenly as though the safety of Russia depended upon it.

Therefore, Mr. Robert Evans, of the United States Department of State. He was a friend to Japan; his country its ally. He was clever and spoke many languages. Marquis Ito offered him a large sum.

Had Yorke Norroy not been guilty of reckless extravagance the season before, he would have refused the offer curtly. As it was, he was heavily in debt and needed the sum mentioned. He wired Washington for two months' leave. When the request was granted, he told the marquis that he would undertake to do what Japan wished. He was paid a certain amount for current expenses, and, on his returning successful, the rather large sum of one hundred thousand yen was to become his.

So Mr. Cecil Warrendell suddenly appeared in Chefoo one day, and later in Port Arthur. Mr. Warrendell was an explorer and a traveler. He was writing a book about the fortresses of the world. So for-

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pish, so utterly inane had he seemed to be that his presence had been almost unnoticed by the Russian police—at first.

Sewed into the lining of the secret agent's coat were certain papers for which the Russians would have killed regiments rather than the man who carried them should step from Russian territory. Yorke Norroy knew this, and, although by quitting Port Arthur so soon he was forced to leave certain details unattended to, he was of the opinion that what he had amply justified him. Therefore, he had taken passage on the *Loongsang* that day, and the next morning, before day-break, would find him in the Gulf of Pechi-li, the vessel's nose turned toward the China promontory.

But the more Norroy thought over the subject, the more his own actions disgusted him. It was true that he had never liked Russians, but, since his stay in Port Arthur, he had come into contact with so many that had impressed him favorably that his sentiments were gradually undergoing a change.

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At least the Russians were white men!

Another reason for his self-recriminations lay in the fact of his knowing full well what Japanese victory meant to Asia. For ten years Norroy had been making trips to China on diplomatic missions, and he had seen the influence of Nippon upon the Celestials. Once the Chinese army had been officered with Europeans. Now nearly all of them had been dismissed and Japanese officers put in their places. China was taking Japan for a model. What if China should shake off her lethargy?

The "Yellow Peril" was no hallucination of a disordered imagination with the cool, alert secret agent. He knew China's vast dormant strength; knew the energy, the patience, the skill of the four hundred million subjects of the Throne-of-a-Thousand-Heavens. If they ever took up arms in earnest, the white man's supremacy would be no more.

After a brisk walk around the Bund, Norroy went to his hotel. It was growing dusk,

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and the harbor lights were twinkling from all descriptions of vessels in the inclosed harbor, from the trading junks to the huge men-of-war. He saw the *Loongsang* moored to the Butterfield Swire wharf, and, taking out his watch, noted that it was six o'clock. He had still six more hours of Port Arthur.

He entered his hotel and went to his room. He did not light his lamp, but sat in the darkness, smoking contemplatively and regarding the hurrying *droshkis*, the itinerant Chinese merchants and the Russian soldiers passing beneath his window. Six hours more, and he would be out of this place! And then — Shanghai, the Ever-Blessed. He smiled with pleasure as the brilliantly lighted dining-room of the Astor House came to his eyes. He heard the town band playing, and saw the well-dressed men and women — Anglo-Saxons, every one of them.

He threw away his cigarette, but did not rise. Although it was past the dinner hour, he did not feel hungry. A distaste for Russian food had taken possession of him.

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A slight noise in the uncarpeted hall without made him sit up suddenly. It sounded as though some one were endeavoring to enter his apartment by stealth. Naturally cautious and suspicious by long training, Norroy listened intently. He heard a key being turned in the lock, and remembered that he had his own key in his pocket. He arose, his hand touching his revolver buckled beneath his blouse, and stepped behind a pair of heavy portieres which hid his rather scanty wardrobe.

Almost noiselessly the door was opened and the figures of two men showed indistinct in the darkness.

"He cannot be here," growled one, in a low tone.

"Exactly what we would have, little brother," returned the other. "Perhaps he has here papers which we need. Strike a light."

The tiny flickering flame revealed two men in the uniform of the Russian police. The wick of the lamp was ignited.

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"He will be here shortly," resumed the first man. "He was last seen at the Salambo, and has not yet been to dinner. So we must see what we can find, and then await him here."

The two men proceeded to break the lock of Norroy's steamer trunk and to throw out, higgledy-piggledy, his articles of attire.

"Do you believe this story, Mikhail Mikhailovitch?" asked the second man. "Is it possible that a prince of Poland could be a traitor?"

"So says the chief," returned Mikhailovitch. "But we may be sure this man carries not the papers away from his person. They will show whether or not our Finnish friend lied."

The question and answer were enough to tell Norroy that his life was not worth a kopeck in Port Arthur. He remembered the Finn; he had never trusted him.

The men had their backs to him. Norroy took down his dispatch bag from a hook and slung it over his shoulder, then drew his Colt

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revolver from its holster, and, moving cautiously forward, struck Mikhailovitch a heavy blow on the temple. The man fell without a groan. As the other started up, Norroy swept the lamp to the floor, and, delivering his antagonist a crushing blow beneath the ear, darted to the door, and opened it.

Finding the key in the lock, he turned the lock and pocketed the key. He wasted no time in reflection, but went down the hall at his usual pace, descended to the foyer and out to Navy Street. Two horses stood saddled without. He mounted one with a great appearance of unconcern, and touched it lightly with the quirt, which was attached to the saddle.

As the beast darted off, a man sprang into his path, and a spurt of yellow fire, followed by the sharp crack of a Luger pistol, made the animal rear on his haunches.

"Stop him! In the czar's name!" came a shout. Norroy brought the quirt heavily over the horse's ears, and, with a great

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heave, it shot out of the man's reach.

Norroy heard a great shouting behind him as he sped along, and twice a bullet sang past his ear. The hoofs of another horse on the frozen ground behind were plainly audible, and, peering back, he could discern a man galloping after him.

Norroy knew it was useless to make his way toward the *Loongsang* or any other ship in the harbor. He must get out of Port Arthur on the land side—make for Dalny or Talienwan. Once out of the city itself, his progress would be much easier.

Pedestrians and horsemen alike drew out of the way of his thundering horse and that of the man who followed him, screaming out for aid in capturing the spy. Passing Cossacks made springs for his bridle rein, but none succeeded. Many took shots at him, and at one Norroy's horse gave a shrill neigh of pain. Feeling downward, Norroy's bare hand encountered streaming blood on the horse's neck. The animal's pace slackened, and the man behind steadily drew nearer.

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They were out of the city now, and were nearing the railway station. If his horse could only hold out until he reached the hills! His pursuer fired, and a bullet whistled through Norroy's felt hat.

Norroy knew that he could do but one thing. His horse was stumbling and could carry him but a few paces further. Suddenly he swerved him from his path, turned him squarely in the Russian's way, and jerked him to a standstill. With his free hand he aimed at the oncoming pursuer, and the shot caught the Russian fairly in the center of the forehead. The man quietly collapsed and tumbled from his horse.

Norroy dismounted and caught the freed horse by the snaffle rein. He swung his foot into the stirrup, touched his new steed lightly with his spur, and galloped off again, leaving the dead Russian and the wounded horse behind.

But it was only an instant's respite, for, over the hill he had left in his wake, he could see a party of horsemen bearing behind him.

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To outride these men would be impossible. What then was he to do?

He swept down a second hill, and the Russian railway station loomed large before him, not a half mile away. Perhaps a few dozen rods from the station was the Nikobadze. The landlord of the little inn was an Armenian, and could be bought. The best thing to do was to buy him, and lie concealed there until he had time to disguise himself and buy a passport.

As he neared the Nikobadze, he again dismounted, turned his horse facing the other way and gave it a smart cut with the quirt. The animal sped off in the direction of Port Arthur, and Norroy made all haste in the direction of the little inn.

He threw open the glass-paned door and walked into the Armenian's private room without knocking.

"Georgios," he said, rapidly, and in Greek, as the little bandy-legged man in the greasy black clothes eyed him tremblingly, "I am wanted by the Russian police. If

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you can hide me here for a couple of days, you can make ten thousand roubles." He thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out a five-hundred rouble note. "That you can have now—the rest when I leave here safely. If you fail in hiding me, not a penny more. Will you do it, Georgios? Speak quick! The police are coming."

"Yes, *effendi*," returned the Armenian, his eyes dilating at the sight of the money. "I have built for me a place to store my goods when there is a fight here. This the police cannot discover. Come with me."

He held out his hand for the note, and Norroy gave it to him.

"Mind you, Georgios," he said, sternly, "if you betray me, not a penny, and, besides"—he pulled up his blouse and showed his revolver, which he tapped significantly—"mind you that, Georgios."

The little Armenian nodded. "You I will not betray, *effendi*," he said, earnestly.

He took Norroy into the hall, and opened another door—they entered a private dining-

NORROY, DIPLOMATIC AGENT

room, and the Armenian crossed the room to where hung a large icon, setting forth in crude colors the birth of Christ. The picture was taller than the average man, and was set firmly against the wall. The Armenian pulled against its right side and touched the head of one of the wise men in the picture. Immediately the supposed painting swung back like a door, and disclosed a little room built into a hollow of the wall, containing a straw pallet and a rude table.

The sounds of galloping horses came to the ears of Norroy. He stepped quickly within. The Armenian swung back the picture and draped the curtains over it—for icons are always hidden from the light.

Norroy lay down on the pallet and the Armenian went back to his room. He had hardly reseated himself before a *droshki*, containing a pretty woman, wrapped in furs, stopped before the Nikobadze, and the woman alighted. Georgios went into the hall to meet her.

The sound of the horses' hoofs was now quite distinct, and the police were in full sight of the inn.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE PRIVATE DINING-ROOM OF THE NIKO-
BADZE.

As the woman mounted the three narrow, wooden steps, Georgios threw open the glass-paned door, and stood obsequiously by while she entered. Then, closing the door, he advanced, rubbing his fat hands.

"How may I serve madame?" he inquired.

"I find that the train to Newchwang is an hour late, and that I must wait that time before taking it," she informed him. "Therefore, during that hour, I would have you serve me dinner."

"It is as madame wishes," said Georgios, bowing low.

"But I must be private and to myself," said the woman, imperiously. "I am the Countess Helma de Czechowicz. I will pay you well."

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The Armenian wrinkled his brow. He had but one private dining-room, and that contained the icon behind which lay the secret room—and the *effendi*. Yet it was but for an hour—and his face brightened. If she were in the room, the pursuing police would have less cause to search it.

“If you will follow me, madame.” He opened the door to the private dining-room. She entered.

“See that my *droshki* driver has a double measure of vodka—and some food. Then give him this”—she handed Georgios a two-rouble note—“and tell him that he may return to the city. I shall not need him longer.”

“Yes, madame,” bowed the innkeeper. “It shall be as madame says.” He lighted the lamp on the center table and called for a Chinese boy to attend to the fire. Then he went out with many *salaams*. The Countess Helma removed her fur cloak, and took off her gloves and her ermine turban; then, sitting down by the table and taking a French

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novel from a small bag she carried, she began to turn the pages in search of the place where her perusal of the tale had ceased.

A Manchu boy entered with wood and coal in separate hods and set about replenishing the dying-out fire in the American stove in the center of the room. Outside, the snow was beginning to fall, and the horses of the oncoming mounted police left their hoof marks behind them in the white drift that was fast covering the ground. The countess drew her chair closer to the stove, giving the riders, as they drew up, but a cursory glance. She spoke to the coolie in Russo-Chinese, and bade him tell his master to have dinner prepared for her swiftly. Then she became engrossed in her De Maupassant story.

There was a knock at the door, and she called out admittance. The Armenian entered, rubbing his hands, apologetically.

"If madame pleases," he said, humbly. "A party of police have ridden up, and say that a spy is concealed within this inn. They demand the right to search this room. A"

NORROY, DIPLOMATIC AGENT

captain of his imperial majesty's army is in charge, and I dare not refuse——”

The countess frowned. “Must I be disturbed by boorish police?” she said, in a displeased tone. “Tell them that a lady occupies this room, and she does not wish to be disturbed.”

There was another knock on the door, and a voice called out: “Come, come, man, the captain does not wish to remain outside your door forever.”

The Armenian opened the door. “The lady begs that you search the room swiftly, your excellency,” he bowed. The officer swept him out of the way, and came into the apartment. The woman withdrew herself by the window and turned her head.

“Your pardon, madame,” said the captain. “But I am looking for a dog of an Englishman who has stolen valuable papers, and believe him to be somewhere in this inn.”

“I have just entered,” she said, trying to make her voice calm. She recognized his

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tones, and did not wish him to see her face. "Search, but search quickly, as I wish to be alone."

She spoke softly and in an assumed voice. The officer busied himself in a tour of inspection, poking beneath divans and tables and opening closets. Finally he pushed back the curtains before the icon.

"A sacred picture, your excellency," almost groveled the Armenian. "An icon."

The officer removed his cap, involuntarily respectful, for religion enters largely into the Russian's code of right and wrong. Then he turned, and caught the woman's profile. He leaned forward, his face a picture of unbelief. Then with a cry, half savage in its intensity, he strode to her side.

"Helma!" he exclaimed. He turned to the Armenian. "Leave the room." The landlord hesitated. "Leave the room, filth!" added the officer, politely. Fearing complications unforeseen, the Armenian quitted the room, shaking as though with the ague.

"So I have found you," exclaimed the of-

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ficer, unpleasantly. "What are you doing here?"

"What right have you to question me?" she returned, facing him. "Suppose you follow the landlord. This is my private room, and I do not desire your presence in it."

"I want an answer," he returned, fiercely. "An answer that explains your presence in this hole, unchaperoned, absolutely alone. Your father left you in my charge when he went to Vladivostok——"

"My stepfather," she corrected. "And I do not acknowledge his right to leave me in your charge. You have no jurisdiction over me, Captain Lenoff."

His quick eye caught a slip of yellow paper within the pages of the novel she had been reading. He reached down and jerked it forth. An ugly look crossed his face when it was plain to him.

"A railway pass to Newchwang," he said, furiously. "What——"

She crossed to the door and threw it open. "I must ask you to go, Captain Lenoff," she

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said, calmly.

“And I must answer you—thus.” He pushed her roughly away, closed the door, locked it and put the key in his pocket. “Now, perhaps, the Countess Helma will be so kind as to answer my question.”

“The Countess Helma does not recognize your right to ask it,” returned the girl, with spirit. She stood erect, facing him, her great black eyes alight with indignation, and a crimson flush on her pale face.

The captain had evidently cooled a trifle at her determined attitude. He sat down on a chair near by and took a case from his pocket, extracting therefrom a tiny cigarette, half paper tube. This he lighted over the lamp, watching the girl, who continued to eye him steadily.

“So you think I have no right to ask the question?” he queried, mockingly. “Very well, my countess! If you do not recognize my legal right, perhaps you will believe me when I refer you to the old saw which denominates might as being right. It seems to

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me that I have the might."

"You have taken advantage of my womanly weakness, that is all I can see, Captain Lenoff," she retorted, without a trace of fear in her tones. "But I do not see that it alters the situation at all."

Captain Lenoff leaned forward. "I came here to catch a spy to-night, but it seems that I shall catch something better," he said. "If you will not answer my question, I will tell you what your reply should have been: You are going to Newchwang, and from there to Peking—to that treacherous Polish rascal whom we drove out of Port Arthur."

She arose. "That *we* drove out of Port Arthur, Captain Lenoff? I think you are mistaken. Was it not Count Stanislas who spared your life in a duel after you had vilely slandered him?"

Lenoff's face grew very red. "At any rate, you shall not go," he said, determinedly.

"There is no law to prevent me. You dare not use force," she replied.

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“Dare not?” He laughed. “Well, I haven’t time to argue the question, for I have a spy to catch to-night; but I’ll make sure you do not go to Newchwang.” He folded the railway pass carefully and placed it in his pocket. She suddenly became aware what would be his next action, and made a wild grasp for her hand bag, which lay on the table. He reached for it at the same time, and a tug ensued. She held on with the grip of desperation.

“Oh! you coward!” she cried. “You coward! Let loose of that. It is mine. You have no right——” The tears welled up in her eyes.

“As I thought,” smiled the captain, grimly, as he gradually pulled it from her. “Like all women, you keep your money in your bag. Without money or pass, I rather think you won’t go to Newchwang.”

She clutched the bag again, holding it over his hand. Her nails tore his wrist.

“Here! enough of that!” he said, sourly, and with a wrench he pulled the bag from

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her grasp and retreated to the other end of the room. He opened it and took out a packet of rouble notes and a letter of credit. Still smiling, he thrust them into his pocket and tossed the bag on the table.

"I'm sure you will not go to Newchwang now," he said. "And now I must be off to hunt the spy. I will put you in charge of two of my men."

She faced him, tearful and consumed with rage. "Oh! you coward—you mean, despicable cad!" she breathed. She made a quick dash across the room and plucked the money from his pocket, holding it firmly in both hands. His face darkened, and he seized her wrists.

"Give it up, Helma," he said, coldly. "Give it up. I do not want to hurt you. Why do you resist? You are powerless, little sister."

"Help! Help!" she screamed, at the top of her lungs. "Help! Help!"

"There is no one to help you," the man informed her, coolly.

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The curtains before the icon parted, and Norroy stood in the shadow of the room. They had their backs to him, and he moved toward the door and stood facing the combatants.

"Pardon me?" he inquired, politely, one hand held behind his back. They did not seem to hear or see him. "Pardon me," he repeated, in a louder tone, and speaking in French, "but do I intrude?"

The officer released the girl and faced him, astonishment and anger in his eyes. "Yes—you intrude," he said, loudly. "You intrude most damnablely." As his eyes took in Norroy from head to foot, he started back startled and dismayed.

"It is—it is——" he muttered. "It is—the Englishman—the spy—the spy——"

His hand sought his pistol strapped to his belt, but the hand behind Norroy came immediately into full view, and Captain Lenoff found himself looking into the steel barrel of a Colt forty-five, held steadily and unwaveringly by the hand of Mr. Yorke

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Norroy.

“Just take that toy out of your belt, captain,” he said, suavely, “and put it on the table. Then put your sword beside it. If you make any noise, *mon ami*, I shall be under the painful necessity of getting rid of one of these cartridges—and I need them all badly. So hurry, *mon cher capitain*.”

Dazed and bewildered, Captain Lenoff obeyed instructions.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN YORKE NORROY, H. I. R. M. S.

Norroy studied the Russian with a glint of humor in his eye, for it was a prearranged plan with him that this man should aid him in his escaping from the predicament in which the Finn had landed him. In the Russian's look there was much malevolence, and the secret agent noted that his glance wandered toward his belt.

"Really, I am becoming forgetful," continued Norroy. "I had omitted to mention that dirk, Captain Lenoff. Just lay that on the table, too, will you?"

"What do you mean?" growled Lenoff.

"I mean that little ornament you wear in your belt. Perhaps your possession of it slipped your memory. But I see the hilt showing." He advanced a few steps toward the officer, and indicated the weapon with

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a twirl of his revolver. Lenoff scowled and folded his arms.

"Come, come!" said Norroy, impatiently. "Don't let us dally. The dirk, man!" The cold light in the secret agent's indefinitely colored eyes was disquieting to the Russian in view of the fact that the revolver was now within a few inches of his nose. He put his hand to his belt, withdrew the tiny weapon, and, after fingering it uncertainly, threw it on the table also. Norroy advanced and picked up the sword, pistol and dirk. The first two he dropped in a corner, but the dirk he retained.

"This is much more satisfactory," he said. "If I fired the revolver it might alarm your men. This will do its work silently!" Norroy thrust the Colt into its holster and held the dagger in his hand.

"From what I gather from madame's conversation and yours," he continued, bowing to the girl, who stood viewing him with undisguised amazement and a little alarm, "you seek to prevent her from carrying out

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her wishes without having any right so to do. Madame wishes to go to Newchwang. Therefore she should be allowed to go. In order that there will be no mistake, I am going to escort her there—with your permission, madame.”

“Monsieur is very kind,” murmured the girl, who had not yet fathomed the exact status of the case.

“So!” said Lenoff, sarcastically. “And may I ask monsieur the spy how he intends to leave Port Arthur without a passport?”

“Certainly you may,” returned Norroy, smiling. “Because in order to see madame to the end of her journey, I am going to ask you to help me, *mon cher capitain*. In view of the fact that you have been very rude to madame, I think you will feel it your duty to accede to any little matters of convenience I may suggest.” He fondled the dirk speculatively, and looked steadily at the Russian.

“Your description is in the hands of both police and soldiers,” growled Lenoff. “And you’ll not get away, mark that, M. Warren-

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dell. You'll be taken back to Port Arthur and stood up against one of the walls of the Gold Hill Fort with a file of soldiers facing you. Don't flatter yourself your country can aid you. You are a spy, and international law doesn't recognize spies as having any nationality."

"Yes?" queried Norroy. "Well, perhaps you are wrong, *monsieur le capitain*. Now for the little favors I am going to ask of you. First return madame's railway pass and her letter of credit."

The Russian gave him a defiant look.

"I must warn you against delays—they are dangerous," pursued the secret agent, his eyes glittering. "Quick now!"

The Russian took the desired articles from his pocket and held them out to Norroy. The secret agent stretched forth his hand. The Russian gripped it tightly, and his other hand shot forth and seized the wrist of the one holding the dagger. With a sudden motion of his body Norroy twisted back both his opponent's hands; then, wheel-

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ing quickly, caught him about the neck in such a way as to render him powerless.

“Madame,” he said, dispassionately, “your property is on the floor. I must ask you to pick it up.” As the Countess Helma moved forward, he spoke in a very low tone to the man in his embrace. “If you attempt that again, Captain Lenoff, you will have your dirk restored to you in a way you won’t like. Let me advise you again to do exactly as I tell you. Haven’t you enough wits to see that I have the upper hand?” He released the glowering officer and stepped back.

“Now, madame,” he continued, “kindly step into that closet at the end of the room and close the door. I am going to ask Captain Lenoff to loan me his uniform, and—you understand?”

The girl nodded, and entered the little closet, shutting the door after her.

“Now, *monsieur le capitain*,” went on Norroy, briskly. “I am going to ask you to hurry, as the stuffy closet is hardly a fit place

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for madame to remain in for any length of time."

"Hurry—what?" inquired Lenoff, sullenly.

"Hurry and disrobe. Take off your uniform and boots—and be quick about it, too."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," returned Lenoff, defiantly.

"Captain Lenoff," said Norroy, icily, "you are dealing with a man whose life is in some peril, and who will not hesitate to take yours in order to save his own. I must have that uniform. That will be my passport to Newchwang about which you inquired a moment ago. I should prefer that you give it to me yourself rather than that I strip it from you when you are *non est*."

The way in which Norroy spoke, and the almost savage gleam of his eye, convinced Lenoff that refusal would be suicidal. He arose and threw off his long, gray coat, took off his riding boots and breeches, removed his blouse and waistcoat, and tossed his cap and sword belt on the top of the pile. Then,

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standing erect in his undergarments, he favored Norroy with an evil look. Norroy advanced, and, keeping an eye on Lenoff, pushed the clothes into another closet at the other end of the room. Then he took off his cartridge belt and unslung the dispatch bag he carried over his shoulder. From the lining of his coat he extracted papers and money which he placed in the dispatch bag, from the trousers he took out a few odds and ends, from the waistcoat a watch and fob and other trinkets. Then he laid his revolver and the Russian's dirk on a little tabouret.

"Now, Captain Lenoff," he said, quietly, "I am going to disrobe. I am just about three feet from you, and can seize you before you reach the door. As you know, I am stronger than you, and, besides, I hold the weapons. So take my advice, and remain perfectly quiet."

Quickly Norroy threw his khaki-serge blouse to the floor, and drew off his tan boots. In exactly the same fashion as the Russian,

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he made a little pile of his clothing in the middle of the floor, Lenoff eying him in helpless rage. Norroy was also in his underclothes now. He picked up the long coat which the Russian had discarded and slipped it on. It reached nearly to his ankles.

“It is fortunate that you and I are about the same size, captain,” he said, cheerily. “This coat fits me very well. I haven’t time to try the others yet. Now, oblige me by arraying yourself in my garments—please don’t argue the question.”

Lenoff was reduced to a state of servile obedience. He feared this mad devil of an Englishman, whose strength of arm was so great, and whose manner showed that he would have little hesitation in dirking him if he refused to obey orders.

In a few moments he was dressed in Norroy’s clothes, and Norroy discarded the long coat and pulled on the sky-blue riding breeches and heelless black boots, after which went waistcoat and undress blouse.

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He strapped his cartridge belt and holster around his waist, but left the dirk on the table. Then he fastened the military collar of the blouse and eyed himself with some satisfaction in the pier glass.

"In truth, captain," he said, smiling, "I believe I make a far better Russian than you. Madame, you may re-enter."

At the sight of the transformed men, the Countess Helma broke into rippling laughter. Lenoff scowled.

"Now, madame," Norroy addressed her, "I see some picture cord there which supports those two paintings at the end of the room. From previous experience, I have found that picture cord makes an excellent substitute for rope. Will you kindly take the pictures down and untie the cord?"

The girl looked at him questioningly, and he nodded toward Lenoff. She smiled again, and untied the cord.

"Now I must ask you to put your hands behind your back, Captain Lenoff," he said, "This lady will then tie them together."

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"Oh! monsieur," protested the Countess Helma.

"You wish to reach Newchwang, do you not?" inquired Norroy.

The girl said no more, but moved toward Lenoff, who made a sudden dash for Norroy. The outstretched dirk met him, and Norroy looked at him angrily.

"You have only to do that once more, Captain Lenoff," he said, with much sternness of manner, "and you will have made your last move in any direction. Put your hands behind your back. Tie him securely, Countess Helma."

The task was easily performed, and Norroy relieved her of the remainder of the picture cord, and, kneeling before the Russian, he tied his feet together. A sudden realization of his position came to Lenoff. He knew what it would mean now if he were discovered in this predicament, his uniform and sword gone, and his quarry escaped.

"Gregorovitch!" he shouted loudly. "A spy! Help! Help!"

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For a moment it looked as though Norroy were about to sheathe the dirk in a tender portion of his anatomy. But the secret agent paused in the very action and laughed.

"Exactly," he said, grimly. "Exactly. A spy!"

He placed his hand to his chin, and whisked off the false Vandyke beard which he wore, following it with the curling mustache, and stood clean shaven, as of yore. To tell the truth, Norroy could not have raised a beard.

He advanced on the Russian, still smiling, and fastened the beard and mustache on his face. Then, picking up his own felt hat, he slouched it over Lenoff's eyes. A handkerchief and a piece of stick were quickly converted into a gag, which was thrust into Lenoff's mouth, and twisted tightly, making speech impossible.

A knock came on the door without, and many voices cried out in Russian: "Open the door—open the door, captain!"

The girl was trembling in every limb, but

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Norroy's face showed nothing but amusement. He reached into his dispatch bag and extracted a wig, cut Russian style, and of a very black shade. This he put over his own hair. Then he picked up Lenoff's cap and pulled it down so as to shade his face; drew on the long coat and buckled the sword belt over it. The knocking on the door had become tempestuous and the shouting outside continued. Norroy reached into the corner, thrust the Russian's sword into the scabbard by his side, and placed the pistol in its holster. Then he stepped over to the lamp and turned the light low.

"Put on your hat and cloak, madame," he told the girl. In the distance the shrill whistle of a train was heard.

Norroy reached into the pocket of the long coat, and took out the door-key, which the Russian had placed there. He unlocked the door, and a dozen imperial police stumbled in. At the sight of the officer they saluted.

"We heard you call, captain," said a sergeant of police breathlessly. "You said

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a spy!"

"Precisely," returned Norroy, in perfect Russian, mimicking the deep tones of Lenoff to a nicety. "There he sits. He was concealed here. That is the man we are in search of, but he has no papers on him. He has confessed that a confederate has taken the papers to Newchwang. Is that not the whistle of the *wagon-lit* without?"

"Yes, captain," returned the sergeant. "The train leaves for Newchwang in less than five minutes."

"Then I will leave this man in your charge, sergeant. But one caution; do not ungag him. I have my reasons for ordering this. Take him to the Gold Hill Fort and do not ungag him until to-morrow morning. Do not ask me why. It is enough that I give the order."

The sergeant saluted again. "It shall be as you say, captain," he returned. "In truth, this is the very man. The description Mikhailovitch gave was correct. Might I ask, captain, how you captured him?"

NORROY, DIPLOMATIC AGENT

“Through this lady, who is a secret agent of his excellency, M. Alexieff,” replied Norroy, bowing to the girl. “But I have no time to waste. I must go to Newchwang. You will not forget my orders, sergeant. He must not be ungagged until to-morrow morning. If this order is not obeyed, serious mishaps may occur, and I shall hold you responsible—you understand?”

“Yes, captain,” said the sergeant. “I understand, and will obey. Shall I inform the general that you have gone to Newchwang?”

“Yes. I shall return by the morning train, and I shall have the papers. You may tell him that, also. Come, madame, or we shall not catch the train.” He bowed low to the bound Russian. “Adieu, monsieur the spy,” he said, pleasantly.

The police made a way for him to pass out, and the two left the room. In the hall he encountered Georgios.

“I will send you a check from Peking,” he breathed in his ear. The astonished Ar-

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menian, not understanding, looked after the pair in dumb amazement.

They reached the train just in time to board it, and went into a first-class compartment. Norroy's uniform was sufficient passport for both himself and the girl.

As he seated himself opposite her, his pent-up feelings of mirth broke loose, and he burst into the heartiest fit of laughter that had ever overcome him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSCIENCE OF YORKE NORROY.

The Port Arthur train reached Newchwang at four o'clock the next morning, and, being unhampered with luggage, Norroy and the girl hastened from the station and entered a mandarin cart which took them to the banks of the Liaho River. It was bitterly cold and the blackness of the night was still on the land. The Liaho stretched before them, frozen, without a *pisa* in sight, but their cart driver finally routed up two sleeping coolies, and the little sleds were dragged out of huts and launched on the glassy surface. The passengers sat in the middle, while the coolies stood behind with long, steel-pointed poles, which they dug into the ice at intervals and sent the light craft skimming over the surface.

Half an hour in the face of the bleak wind,

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and they were landed on the frozen bank of the Yinkow side. It was nearing five o'clock now, and the train for Shan-hai-kuan left at that hour. They had time to spare, for the railroad station was very near. Norroy purchased two tickets of an inscrutable-looking Tartar, with long, drooping mustachios, and they went into their compartment.

Once out of Yinkow, there was no possibility of arrest, and when the last warning toot of the locomotive's whistle was heard, and the cars began to move, Norroy breathed a long sigh of relief.

The girl had been talking for some time, and Norroy had been listening intently.

"It is then truth, monsieur, that you carry the plans of Port Arthur on your person?" she said.

"I have not told you so, madame," he replied.

"Assuming a purely hypothetical case, then," went on the girl, "you have the

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plans; you intend to surrender them to Japan. I am a Russian, monsieur, and I love my country. Lenoff is not a fair example of my countrymen, as you know, you who can speak our language so fluently. My stepfather has been unkind to me, and I am leaving him, and with him, Russia. Perhaps I shall never return. But I love my country, monsieur, I love my country as well as you love yours, and if you are English, you must love yours greatly.

“Suppose there should be war? If Japan were in possession of these papers which we suppose you carry, Port Arthur would easily fall before her. That would mean the end of Russia in the East. Perhaps you hate Russia as do most English. But is not Russian domination better than Japanese? Have you reflected what it would mean should Japan rule Asia? Perhaps my own country is grasping, but is not Japan more so? Perhaps my own country does not always keep her promises, but when did Japan ever keep a promise?”

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Norroy knew that what this girl said was truth. Russians he disliked, but not so much as he did Japanese.

"You know, you must know, since you are working for Japan, that she has no gratitude, no moral obligation. Remember the officers she decoyed from European armies and navies to officer her own people. She promised them retirement at double the salary their own government would have paid them. They went, they served Japan faithfully for years, they trained her soldiers and sailors. Then, when Japan had learned all they could teach her, she cut them adrift in their old age without a penny or a prospect. You know that is true."

"Yes," he agreed, "that is true."

"You, monsieur, you who are so brave and strong, should not stoop to such work for such a nation. Were it your own country that looked for war with mine, I would not urge you. But it is not for your country that you are doing this. Russia is cruel, corrupt, sometimes barbarous. But what of

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Japan?"

Norroy lighted a cigarette and nodded understandingly.

"It is much to ask of you, monsieur. And you have been so kind to me that I do not wish to appear ungrateful. You have risked your life for these papers. No doubt they are worth much to you. You have nothing to gain by doing what I wish unless you value your own self-appreciation. But perhaps you do not look at matters in the same light as I."

"Suppose you state explicitly what you wish me to do, countess," said Norroy, brushing the ashes from his cigarette.

"Do not, oh! do not take those papers to Japan. Ah! I have offended you, monsieur. I know it is much to ask, and I know that it appears presumptuous that I should judge you. But, monsieur, what you are doing is wrong—all wrong."

The secret agent looked out of the window of the car at the expanse of brown country covered with sparse vegetation, and through

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which the tiny canals wended their way like threads of silver. He said nothing, but he was thinking, nevertheless, thinking deeply. He had gone through much to win these papers. There was a reward at the end of his journey which would relieve him of financial embarrassment, and make him able to return to his own country, unfettered and under no obligations. On the other hand—

Around a curve of the road the Great Wall of China appeared, faint and shadowy. Within a few moments they would be out of Manchuria, and he would be free from any possible chance of trouble from Russia. The journey was nearly at an end, the results accomplished. It had taken time, trouble and much that was disagreeable to do the thing that she now asked him to undo.

“It is right,” she murmured. “It is right. I only ask you to do what your own conscience must tell you is the only course.”

He did not answer her. The train swept on until it looked as though the Great Wall

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was about to topple over upon them; a second later and the train swept through the break and they were speeding over Cheh-li province, with Manchuria and Russian domination behind. Shan-hai-kuan, with its barracks and hotel, was visible to the eye. Here, under the protection of American and Japanese arms, he was safe.

But he had made up his mind. His hand went into his breast, and a bulky package, bound with red tape, was extracted.

"These are the plans, madame," he said, simply. A little fire burned brightly in a stove in the center of the compartment. Norroy opened the door, and fingered the papers uncertainly. Then, with a quick movement, he cast them on the flames, and watched the hungry fire lap around their edges until a yellow spurt showed they were ignited.

"Ah! monsieur! monsieur!" she cried. The next moment she had thrown her arms about his neck and kissed him on the lips.

Gently he untwined her arms, and looked

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at her steadily.

"You are going to meet Count Stanislas in Peking," he said, slowly. "You are his fiancée, are you not, countess?"

"I was foolish—I did not know," she whispered. "You——"

The train came to a sudden stop, and, looking out of the window, the files of soldiers of many nations were seen drawn up to salute.

"Come," said Norroy. "Here is Shanghai-kuan and the hotel. And remember that Count Stanislas loves and trusts you, even as my fiancée trusts me."

She uttered a faint cry as he declared the tie that bound him, but stifled her emotion and picked up her hand-bag. Norroy, smiling grimly, as he wondered what girl in the United States he could claim with any such title, opened the door for the Russian countess, and they left the train.

When he was alone in his room he eyed his likeness in the mirror.

"Yorke Norroy," he said, with much

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earnestness, "you are a fool."

But, somehow, the restful feeling that comes when one has done the right at all costs did not bear out his reiterated statement to the inoffensive likeness.

The Honor of the Ambassador

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRETARY OF LEGATION.

In the house of many secrets and unassuming appearance, Yorke Norroy had been waiting for some half an hour, smoking his inevitable cigarettes and gazing out of the bay windows on the shrubbery and well-kept yew hedges. It was very seldom that he was called upon to perform another mission immediately after returning from one which had kept him abroad for nearly six months. Yet the secretary's note was final, and so Norroy had come.

He was running over in his mind his list of invitations, and wondering how it would be possible to cancel them all without suspi-

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cion, when the secretary entered, placid and imperturbable as ever. The two men shook hands, and the secretary offered Norroy a cigar, which the secret agent declined. The chief of the state department lighted one himself, and followed Norroy's gaze to the shrubbery. Finally he spoke.

"Can you procure a bid to the Cochranes' house party?" he inquired, without introduction. But Norroy was hardened to startling questions of this sort which seemed entirely irrelevant to his duties as secret agent.

"Why, yes," he returned, slowly. "I think I have a 'bid' now. I'm not quite sure, but I fancy I have. I should refuse it in the usual course of things. House parties are always stupid affairs, and this one is scheduled for two weeks, I believe. Imagine being chained to the same set of women and men for two solid weeks!"

"Looking at it from your peculiar standpoint of social affairs, I suppose you're right," commented the secretary. "But you are the only man in existence—so far

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as I know—who can carry out just what an invitation to this affair would begin. Senor de Cabanas and his wife are to be guests—and Gilbert Clayton will also be there——”

Norroy smiled slightly and tapped the corner of his cigarette case on the table. He scrutinized the secretary with his cold eyes.

“So the scandal club influences even the secretary of state,” he observed, lightly. He rolled a cigarette between his white fingers and blew the tobacco away. “Even the secretary of state,” he repeated.

“Not the scandal club, Yorke,” responded the secretary, gently. “*I know*. It has gone considerably further than scandal. I have female relatives in Washington, you know. I also have some clever agents who move in Washington circles. Incidentally, I attended the ball given by the Andevian minister several weeks ago. Accidentally, I overheard a conversation between a certain lady and Gilbert Clayton.”

“Then, to put it very concisely, Mr. Secretary——?” suggested Norroy.

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"Quite so! Quite so!" nodded the chief of the state department. "You are right, Yorke. There is no need to beat about the bush. To begin with facts: Eugenio de Cabanas is the ambassador to the United States from the republic of Andevia——"

"Exhibit A," interjected Norroy, with a faint smile.

"The Senora Cecilia de Cabanas is a young and pretty woman. Incidentally, she is an American girl. She has been the wife of Cabanas for a year. He married her because she was wealthy and he needed her wealth. She married him because he is a diplomat and has a Spanish title which is as old as the Cid. Her father was a leather tanner and her mother a factory girl. By virtue of her marriage, she is a light in what we are pleased to term 'society' here in Washington."

"Being Exhibit B," again broke in Norroy.

"Precisely. Exhibit C, to carry out your metaphor, is Gilbert Clayton, son of the for-

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mer president of Andevia and the heir to a great fortune. Came to the United States from Andevia as secretary of legation. Is young, handsome and, as before stated, wealthy. By nature a rash, headstrong youth, who has had his way for so long a time that he is incorrigible."

"Then the case evidently stands thus: With your permission, Mr. Secretary—Clayton is in love with Senor de Cabanas' wife. Cabanas is in love with his wife, also, a growth since his marriage. His wife is not in love with him, but maybe is in love with Clayton. That's the situation. May I ask how all this bears on the business of the state department?"

"You may—you certainly may," replied the secretary. "Andevia is, at the present time, on the eve of making certain concessions to the United States which will enable her to perfect a commercial arrangement of which you know—I need not go into details on that, need I?"

"No, it isn't necessary," answered the

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secret agent, lighting the cigarette which he had been fingering.

"Very well. Senor de Cabanas has been the instrument through which the United States has been enabled to make this arrangement. If he were to be removed at the present time, the thing would fall through. This would mean considerable loss of money to the United States, and, what is worse, it would place this country in a position that would call down upon the state department the censure of the press and the people, besides making us the laughing-stock of European diplomatic circles, which, naturally, would be a condition of affairs we desire to avoid."

"Rather," responded Norroy, dryly.

"From what I have myself heard, from what I have learned, and from what Ferris, Huntley Carson, and others have been detailed to discover, Senora de Cabanas is ready to run away from Washington, elope with this young Gilbert Clayton. Suppose such a thing happened? Cabanas would be

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immediately recalled by his government; would ask to be recalled, in fact. He could not stand the shame of such a position. Nor would Andevia tolerate an ambassador whose marital affairs placed the country in such a light. Result: Cabanas recalled, the arrangement of which I speak falls through."

Norroy puffed at his cigarette for some moments before he commented upon what the secretary had said. Finally he tossed the cigarette into the ash-receiver and looked his chief squarely in the eyes.

"What is the answer?" he wished to know.

"The answer? I should think it would have been easy to read. The answer is, Yorke, that the government of the United States, not wishing such a state of affairs to come to pass, has decided to preserve the integrity of Senor de Cabanas' household."

Norroy smiled. "And with that end in view?"

"It calls on Mr. Yorke Norroy to consum-

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mate its end. In plain words, Yorke, you will prevent a scandal. You will not only see that this elopement does not occur, but you will manage the affair in such a way that Senor de Cabanas will not suspect that such a thing was ever contemplated. You will also teach the Senora de Cabanas that such affairs are not fitting in the wife of a man who represents his native land in a foreign country."

"Oh!" ejaculated Yorke Norroy. "Oh, that's it, eh?" His cold eyes twinkled. "Rather unusual work for a secret agent, isn't it, Mr. Secretary? And, by the way, since you have told me what I am going to do, will you be so kind as to reveal to me the methods which will bring the affair to such an ending as you describe? I am not a hypnotist, a mesmerist, nor any 'ist' that controls the will of other people. Nor have I the power to keep apart two people who love one another. 'A woman's will is the wind's will,' you know."

The secretary arose. "I don't think it is

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necessary for me to suggest anything further than that you accept the invitation to the Cochranes' house party. After that, I will leave it to you. You have never yet failed. You are in possession of a fund of ingenuity which has brought many tasks more difficult than this through in the manner desired. Also, you know more about women and their ways than is given to most men to understand. This is Friday, is it not? The Cochranes have issued the invitations for Saturday morning. Suppose you call around and see Lloyd Cochrane this afternoon. Good afternoon, Yorke."

Norroy shook his hand, the merry twinkle still in his eye. "Don't blame me if I score a failure this time, Mr. Secretary," he said.

When the head of the state department had taken his departure, Yorke Norroy resumed his seat and gave himself over to thought. Presently he looked at his watch and arose.

" 'A woman's will is the wind's will,' " he sighed. "And a house party—for two

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weeks." His tones expressed mild disgust.

On returning to his apartment, he found that the invitation was there, as he had surmised. Below the formal engraved portion of the card was written, in a woman's hand—the writing of Mrs. Lloyd Cochrane:

Do come, Yorke. We intend to have some amateur theatricals, and there's no one who can arrange them quite like you. Lloyd joins me in this request.

There was nothing to that. Norroy had a dozen other invitations to spend the Christmas holidays, and each one had something similar written on it in the hand of the hostess. For Yorke Norroy was, deservedly, a popular man among the Washington set. First, because he had many ingenious ways of amusing a crowd; second, because his family was one of the few that our English cousins across the way saw fit to include in the "American Aristocracy," and third, because his personality was illusive and inscrutable. Not one of the people who so invited him was aware of his connection with the department of state.

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Norroy put Mrs. Cochrane's invitation in his pocket and sallied out for the Cochranes' Dupont Circle home. After seeing Mrs. Cochrane and listening to her suggestions, he arose with a promise to present himself at the Pennsylvania Railroad station the following day at eleven, where the train would be taken for the Cochranes' country place.

"There will be a jolly lot," Mrs. Cochrane had said. "You'll have no end of amusement."

"Yes, I rather fancy I shall have considerable amusement," was Norroy's reply. But it did not mean what she imagined it did.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOLLY OF YOUNG GILBERT CLAYTON.

What particular charm lay for Norroy in the room which he selected, Mrs. Cochrane could not exactly see. She had shown him a plan of the house as they sat in the Pullman, whirling southward, and Norroy had placed his finger on a certain spot which indicated that a room was empty. "Have my traps put in there, Molly," he had requested.

"But that's in the old wing of the house. We put only the married couples there, because the rooms are larger. That room you point out is little and not furnished very well," she remonstrated. "It hasn't even a private bath."

"But it is in the old wing, and it overlooks the creek," Norroy had insisted. He had been to the Cochranes' place before during the fox-hunting period. "I like old rooms. And, besides, there's the view — —"

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“Oh, very well,” she returned. “Have it your own way, Yorke. I was thinking of putting you here”—she pointed to another room marked unoccupied. “It’s a much better room. But have it your own way.”

So it was that Yorke Norroy was installed in the room directly across the passage from the one which held the ambassador from Andevia and his pretty wife. But any notion that this was the reason for selection did not occur to Mrs. Cochrane, for she was well informed as to the circle of Norroy’s acquaintances, and she knew that neither the ambassador nor his wife had more than a bowing acquaintance with him.

During the few days that still antedated Christmas, it did not seem that Norroy had much opportunity to observe the goings and comings of the three people on whose cases the secretary had detailed him. On questions of decoration and arrangement, the assistance of Yorke Norroy was coveted, and, having delivered himself into the hands of Mrs. Cochrane, he could not well refuse to

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give her the benefit of his taste and discernment. Consequently, he became installed as Molly Cochrane's assistant on the holiday arrangements, and the two spent much time together in the ballroom of the Virginia mansion, where, aided by the servants, they changed the oaken-floored, tapestry-walled apartment into a veritable fairyland of holly, mistletoe, fir and spruce, bedecked with candles and tinsel.

All this took time, and was carefully hidden from the rest of the party. It was intended that the Christmas decorations should come as a surprise to them, and, consequently, during their working hours, the two decorators shut themselves up in the great room and saw no one.

"I declare, I have a right to be jealous," Lloyd Cochrane had said, laughingly. "My wife closeted for four hours a day with the most desired man in Washington. Be careful, Yorke. This is a good place for a duel, you know. The spirit of my ancestors speaks loudly in these walls."

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But, in spite of his work on the decorations, the tableaux and the theatricals, Yorke Norroy did not by any chance lose sight of the real reason for his being at Cochrane-croft. Twice, gun in hand, he had come across the Senora de Cabanas and young Clayton walking in the woods, and on neither occasion had he given them either visual or auricular notice of his presence, although it was perfectly plain to see that he was simply out on a gunning trip.

Another time he had joined a party of skaters from the house, and, selecting Mona Larrabee as his companion, had managed to keep Clayton and his *vis-a-vis* in sight, seemingly by accident. Mona Larrabee was, undoubtedly, one of the foremost members of the scandal club. She had not a single thought of any weight in her pretty little head, and was, consequently, forced to make conversation out of the foibles and *faux pas* of her acquaintances. Were the slightest breath of suspicion raised as to the character of any woman, Mona Larrabee knew of

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it, and when retold, it assumed proportions that were hardly credible.

She admired Norroy immensely, as did most of the women of his acquaintance, mostly because she did not understand the man, and therefore, was obliged to look up to him to a certain extent. The fact that he had chosen her as his companion for the skating gave her several little thrills, and she was exerting herself to be bright, lively, and entertaining. Had she known that Norroy had selected her for the purpose of hearing her talk on a certain subject, she would hardly have been flattered.

The majority of the skaters chose the widening of the stream for their sport, and here it was that the fun waged the thickest. The men and women, released from the conventions of the city, forgot their grown-upness and frolicked about on the glassy surface with all the keen delight of childhood. The stream at this point ran through the Crane grounds, and was, consequently, a private preserve. Therefore, the mem-

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bers of the house party were not compelled to skate in company with those they did not know.

The ambassador from Andevia had remained in the house. He did not understand skating, and, besides, his thin, tropical blood was not equal to enjoyment in the open in winter time. But his wife was there, and with her, as usual, young Gilbert Clayton.

For all Yorke Norroy appeared to join in the games and to listen to the prattle of pretty Mona Larrabee, he noticed that the Senora de Cabanas and Clayton had detached themselves from the rest of the party, and were skating, arm in arm, up the creek and toward the bend, where the trees and bushes hid its upper reaches from the view of those on the lower part. He waited for them to disappear around it, however, before he determined to follow them.

"What do you say to a race up the creek, Mona?" he suggested.

"Yes," she said. "That's better than skating. How much

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start will you give me?"

"Two hundred yards," he answered, as they skated out of the crowd. "Now—ready—go!"

The lithe figure of the girl shot forward, and Norroy waited until the two hundred yards had been fairly taken. Then he started in pursuit, not straining himself, and allowing the girl to keep the lead.

But, as he turned the bend in the creek, he noticed that Miss Larrabee had ceased her course, and was standing beneath the branches of an oak tree which grew on the water's edge, awaiting his coming up.

When he reached her, he gave her a look of assumed surprise. "Tired?" he asked.

"No," she shook her head. "Don't let's go any farther, that's all."

"Oh, very well," he responded, pulling off his glove and reaching for his cigarette case. He lit one of its contents. "We'll go back, then."

"Do you know why I don't want to go any further?" she asked. "Therefore, I

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"No," he responded, faint interest in his tone.

"Mrs. de Cabanas and Mr. Clayton are right ahead. They're sitting under a tree. I saw them."

"Well?" His inflection showed that he was slightly amused.

"I wouldn't have them think we were following them. But, really, they must give us credit for very little sense. I should think the ambassador's eyes would be opened sometime."

"Gossip! Gossip!" he said, shaking his finger, warningly. "He turns her over to Clayton, very likely. Why should women always impute motives?"

The retort angered Miss Larrabee. "At any rate, we can't help but see a thing when it's thrust under our very noses. I don't gossip. I never gossip. You can ask Edith. I don't try to find things out."

The conversation was progressing along just the lines that Norroy intended. He knew no better way to get the truth out of a

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woman than to banteringly deny what she said.

"All theory, Mona," he continued, as they skated slowly back toward the house. "You haven't a single bit of ground for your suspicions. You impute—you imagine. Thus a woman's character is ruined——"

"Oh, very well, Yorke Norroy," she returned, her cheeks flushing. "Suppose I should tell you something that would convince you that I have grounds? Not that I care what you think——"

"I'd rather not hear it," he observed, carelessly. "I know the grounds that women have——"

"Well, I shall tell you, then, just to prove to you that women have as good grounds for their suspicions as men. I was in the library last night, back in one of those little alcoves. I had no idea of listening to anyone. Besides, it was nearly twelve o'clock, and I didn't think anyone would be in at that hour. I left the Middlesons and the Parkers playing chess, and stole back to the

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library to get a book; I had begun it in the morning and was interested. Besides, I wasn't sleepy. I was fumbling around for the electric light in the alcove, when the door opened and two people came in. Then I heard Mr. Clayton say something about loving her enough to give up everything, and she telling him not to touch her. Of course, I knew who it was the minute they spoke, but I couldn't turn on the light after hearing it. So I just sat still. She said she had a husband who loved her, and he said that Senor de Cabanas didn't love her. That he loved her money, and all that kind of thing. He talked on about those things until she got very angry, and said something about her husband being a brute to speak about his wife in such a manner. Then Mr. Clayton told her there was a two o'clock train, and that they could take it, and by the next morning be in New York and engaging passage for Europe. But she said 'no.' Then she said the minute after, 'We should wait until after Christmas'—and—"

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"Out of your track a little bit, aren't you?" came the cheery voice of Tommy Fielding, who suddenly turned the curve. "This skating is poor. I'm going back."

"I think we'd better," agreed the blonde girl on his arm. "How was it up the river?"

"Rather full of bumps—and jolts," responded Norroy, gravely. The other two turned.

"And Mr. Clayton said 'After Christmas, then. I ask for no better Christmas present.' And then—he kissed her."

"H'm!" commented Yorke Norroy. "Have you told this to anyone else, Mona?"

"No, I haven't," snapped the girl. "And I only told it to you to show you that——"

"Never mind," interrupted Norroy. "I understand. You were right. I was wrong. But don't tell it to anyone else."

"I told you I was not a gossip." Actually the girl believed that she was not, and really her scandalmongery came from sheer inability to hold her tongue rather than from any malice aforethought.

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"Well, I believe you," said Norroy, slowly. "I believe you, Mona. But I want you to give me your promise, and I'll tell you why. I am going to take a hand in this matter. Mrs. de Cabanas does not love young Clayton. She has simply taken up with him because she does not understand her husband. Now, there is no reason why there should be another diplomatic scandal, is there? All that is necessary to do is to convince the ambassador's wife of Clayton's pettiness; which, with your assistance, I am going to do."

His words carried conviction with them. Mona Larrabee looked up at him, admiration in her glance. "I'll do all I can to help," she announced. "What shall it be?"

"Keeping quiet when the subject of their affair is mentioned, to begin with—you promise that—faithfully?"

"Faithfully," she returned. "Really, I won't say a word, Yorke."

"And, second, by keeping your ears open and letting me know if an elopement is im-

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minent. But do it in such a way that no suspicion will be aroused. You promise that, Mona?"

She nodded, vigorously.

"Very well, then. I believe you—and I trust you. Don't give me reason to regret it."

"I won't. Really, I won't, Yorke," she said, earnestly. And Yorke Norroy knew from her tone that she cared more for the retainment of his respect than she did to be the first to circulate a piece of scandal.

Nevertheless, as he thought the matter over that night, he was far from satisfied. He did not care to trust a woman with a secret. Of course, it was not his own secret, nor had he told Mona Larrabée anything. He had adopted the only means for keeping her quiet that came to his mind. Not that he was unconvinced that she would keep her word, but Norroy had a peculiar pride in his mission, the same consisting of the desire to accomplish his purposes alone and without aid from anyone.

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He had learned a great deal that he wished to know, however, from the little scatter-brain, and finally his feeling of self-satisfaction returned and he whistled a music-hall air.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPECIAL CAR FOR NEW YORK.

Mona Larrabee was as good as her word, as Norroy hoped she would be. This little person respected Norroy to a great extent, and it gave her a considerable sense of importance to be intrusted with his confidence. So for the next few days she went about the house with her small, pink ears perked up for anything which might throw the faintest light on the situation impending. Daily she held conversations with Norroy in some secluded corner, telling him what she had learned—which was little, but, by the same token, all that was in the air.

Senor de Cabanas had lately become a slave to the poker habit, the fine points of which he was gradually acquiring, and he spent most of his time in the smoking room with Lloyd Cochrane and others, playing the

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game, and generally losing. Cabanas was a very likable fellow, and, strangely for a man of Spanish extraction, trusted his wife to an extent almost inconceivable. He was a friend of Clayton's father, and the youngster was looked upon by him almost in the light of a son. Indeed, it was Cabanas himself who had requested his appointment as secretary of legation.

The fact that Gilbert amused his wife appealed to Cabanas as a very wise dispensation of the fates. He himself, although he loved this American girl with all the warmth and fervor of a Spaniard, had not the little graces which mark the average Anglo-Saxon husband's treatment of a wife. When alone with her he would give his love full play, much the same as he would have treated anything that appealed to his artistic soul. But a consistently loving treatment was something he had not imagined. He had the Old World conception of women to too great an extent—creatures to be petted and humored, and to be loved at such times as

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it pleased their masters to show affection for them.

It was a mode of procedure which was not in line with the views of his wife. She might have respected, even loved, him if he had been consistently cold. She might have adored him if he had shown warmth throughout their entire relations with one another. But, as it was, she almost hated him for his disregard of her, and despised his weakness when he flamed out into fervid Latin protestations.

At the time when she had fully decided that she cared nothing for her Andevian husband, Gilbert Clayton came to the legation. He was young, well-favored, and gave her the fervor of a boyish love. She had not taken him seriously at first. But as her love for her husband seemed to wane and die, she found that she must have some substitute. So Clayton grew into her affections.

Had the woman come from a stock with family traditions, her pride would have sent

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the boy from her. But she was very near the earth. Her father had been a laborer, and her mother of the same degree. They had not taught her to repress her emotions—and she had not learned on her own initiative.

But a few days before coming to the Cochranes, Gilbert Clayton had reached his twenty-fifth year; and, true to a promise made earlier in his son's life, Milner Clayton had transferred an account which reached into the hundred thousands to his son's account in Washington. This had made the young man independent. And—

All during lunch Mona Larrabee had been making signs to Norroy. After the meal was over, he took the first opportunity to join her in the library.

“Well, Mona?” he inquired, when he was sure that there were none to hear. “Tell me—anything new? I'll have to hurry back and join Molly Cochrane, you know. We throw open the ballroom to-night. Christ-

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mas eve, you know!"

"Yes, I know. But this is something important, Yorke—I could hardly wait to tell you. I heard Mrs. de Cabanas say to Mr. Clayton in Spanish—you know I understand it very well, because I was on one of father's Cuban plantations for nearly a year—she said, not thinking I'd understand, of course—you know, it was in the billiard room. They were leaning on their cues and talking when I came in with Rolly Parker. Of course, they knew he didn't understand, and they supposed I didn't. They were talking in English before we came in—I know that; but they finished in Spanish——"

"Well?" asked Norroy, amusedly. "What did they say?"

"Why, he said: 'We can catch the *Germania* to-morrow, if we leave on the two o'clock train to-night.' And she said—she was angry, too—'I told you I wouldn't leave until after Christmas—well, I don't think I'll leave at all now.'"

"Well?"

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"That was all they said, except he growled out: 'I'll do it anyhow—suit yourself—but I'll do it.' And she said: 'I wouldn't waste my money, if I were you.' But from the way she said it, it sounded as though she were going to give in. And he said: 'I'm going down now—do you want to come?' And she said she didn't and began to knock balls around with her cue, as though she was talking of something that didn't amount to much. She speaks fearful Spanish, and I could hardly understand her—but that's about what they said."

Norroy thanked her, but his look was puzzled. Exactly what the conversation meant he did not know. He remembered now that Clayton had left the house in his automobile a little before lunch, and had not yet returned. When he joined Molly Cochrane in the ballroom, he took the first opportunity to ask if any of the guests were leaving before the mask ball, which was scheduled for the night—Christmas eve.

"Why, no," she answered. "Why?"

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"Oh, I saw young Clayton pulling out in his auto. I thought maybe——"

"He's not going. He went down to the railroad station to get a special delivery package—so he said—something the station agent telephoned him about."

Several hours later, when Norroy had seen Clayton return without any such package, his eyes lighted up a trifle. He went to his room.

For the convenience of her guests, Mrs. Cochrane had gone to the trouble of having telephones installed in all the bedrooms. These connected with the various parts of the house, and had also a long-distance connection. Norroy asked for the girl who acted as clerk for the station agent at Fauquier, the railroad station.

"Hello—is this the station agent? This is Mrs. Cochrane's. Have you a special delivery package for Mr. Clayton? Yes—Mr. Gilbert Clayton—no? Well, you did have one? No? Well, wasn't Mr. Clayton down there this morning? Yes—I thought so.

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He was thinking of running up to Washington. He hasn't returned to the house yet—has he gone? No? Well, I told him to get me tickets for to-night's train—did he get them? I was afraid there wouldn't be a train at two o'clock. Oh, there is, then. That's good. So he got the—what, a special car? A special car, you say? That's the New York express? Special through to New York—well, that's right. Thank you. Yes. Good-by."

Norroy put down the receiver. The purport of the conversation was plain enough now. As he began to change his clothes for dinner he ruminated, and the results of the ruminations led to an inspection of the bathroom across the way.

As Mrs. Cochrane had said, there was no private bath attached to Norroy's room; but to offset this disadvantage—which was also that of Roland Parker's, who had the next room to Norroy—the private bath to Mrs. de Cabanas' room had been locked on both sides, and it was here that Messrs. Norroy

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and Parker made their way each morning. Norroy had observed the door the first morning, and, with his customary retentiveness, the fact that the door opened into the Cabanas' suite remained in his mind.

The two rooms which the ambassador and his wife shared were intended for single rooms, and consequently each one of them had a private bath attached. For this reason, Mrs. Cochrane felt she was doing them no injustice by depriving them of one of them. So it was that the room adjoining Mrs. de Cabanas' came to be used by Yorke Norroy.

After closely observing the door for several moments, and making quite sure that Mrs. de Cabanas had quitted the apartment adjoining, Norroy took a bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket and fitted them, one by one, in the door. The fifth one proved efficacious. Norroy turned the lock and opened the door. He confronted masses of portieres, which had been hung up to hide the bare wood.

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It was all he desired to know. He did not even look into the room. He closed the door and locked it, detaching the fifth skeleton key immediately afterward.

"If," he said, slowly—"if——" He held up the key. The power of following motives and transforming them into future actions was a remarkable part of Norroy's make-up. A possibility had occurred to him, and he was preparing for the possibility.

He slipped the key into the pocket of his claw-hammer coat and went into the smoking room, where he found Cabanas playing poker, as usual. There Norroy remained until the dinner hour.

As he walked toward the dining-room, he remembered that Cabanas would eventually go back to that poker game which he had quitted with such reluctance.

"Is he as blind as a bat, or doesn't he care?" Those were the questions Norroy asked himself as he seated himself beside Mona Larrabee, after escorting her to the table. The guests had turned out in full din-

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ner regalia, in spite of the fact that they must change their dress for their mask costumes almost immediately after. Norroy noted furtively that Mrs. Cabanas had a heightened color, which was not caused by rouge. He also noticed that Gilbert Clayton seemed to be in good spirits.

“All of which proves nothing,” he commented, mentally. “But why the special car? Is it a speculation, or has she given her consent?”

This was the fourth question Norroy had asked himself, and he was growing rather weary of questions which had no answers that he could give. So, for the moment, he dismissed the subject, and nibbled at the *hors d'oeuvres*.

CHAPTER IV.

YORKE NORROY—STAGE MANAGER.

Certainly no better opportunity for clandestine lovers could be given than that same mask ball. It had been decreed by Mrs. Cochrane that conventionality was to be thrown underfoot and trodden upon, and, in order that no person should be able to remind her or any of her friends of the same sex that they had been a trifle free in their conduct, the rigors of mask costume had been observed to the smallest detail. Even to Yorke Norroy, who had the Bertillon system in his mind continually, and who could take measurements by it mentally, the figures of the majority of the maskers were unrecognizable.

As may be judged, the liberty allowed by such disguises gave rise to a festive affair, in which restraint was utterly forgotten.

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There were waltzes, two-steps and even cake walks ; mazurkas, lancers, minuets ; two fair ones, who had evidently been preparing for the occasion, gave imitations of skirt dancers, and succeeded so well that many of the men wished exceedingly to know whom they might be.

An orchestra had been brought down from Washington, and, stationed behind screens and ferns, they played the popular airs of the day. During the intermissions, the conservatory and the morning room were visited—the latter for the purpose of refreshment, for there stood huge silver bowls, from which liveried servants ladled out portions of punch.

By the time Norroy had been in the ball-room an hour, he had identified young Clayton. Having found him, it was not difficult to figure out that the fair female in the attire of a Watteau shepherdess, who danced with Clayton almost continually, was the wife of the ambassador from Andevia. So Norroy's eyes kept the figure of young Beau

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Brummell in sight, and watched his comings and goings with more than usual interest. Part of his watching bore the fruit of informing him that the couple in whom he took so much interest missed many of the dances, and sat much in the conservatory. Also, that their visits to the morning room were frequent. He need not have been in the morning room to see that, for it was perfectly evident that young Beau Brummell's legs were not as steady as they might be toward the third hour of the ball.

There was some one else whom the melancholy Dane sought to identify. The cold eyes behind the black mask of the man in the attire of *Hamlet* sought continually for Mona Larrabee, but it was some time before he found her, in the shape of a page boy of the days of Louis Quinze, her shapely form in the velvet knickerbockers, silk stockings, red-heeled slippers and tailed velvet coat. It was a tiny mole on her chin which betrayed Mona, and Yorke Norroy told her so.

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"Ssh!" she warned, in a sepulchral whisper. "Ssh!" When he had led her to the conservatory, she watched him smoke and listened to what he had to say.

"You noticed the girl in the pink Watteau attire?" he said, in a low tone. She nodded. "Mrs. de Cabanas—and, of course, you know her partner?" She nodded again.

The dance music struck up, and the couples began to file out of the conservatory. The two of whom Norroy had spoken swished past them, as did all who had been sitting in the conservatory, save only the melancholy Dane and the little page of the Louis Quinze period.

"You see where they sit?" Norroy whispered. "Right there." He pointed to a seat before a bay window. "Well—if you'll do it, I want you to lie down behind those ferns as though you were asleep. It's dark over there, and, besides, your costume harmonizes with the greenery. I couldn't do it. I'm too tall." Quickly he told her of the special car. "We must know definitely whether or not

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they intend to take it, if we are going to prevent them—you understand?"

"I don't like to eavesdrop," objected the girl.

"It's in a good cause," answered Norroy. "And, besides, if you're discovered, there's no risk for you. You know too much for them to dare unmask you—and, besides, I'll be somewhere near by. Will you do it—quick? The music is going to stop."

"Yes," agreed the girl, rather unwillingly. "I'll do it." She moved across the room and lay face downward in the place which Norroy had pointed out. A moment later, Norroy was in the morning room, and the couples had begun to file into the conservatory again.

From morning room he wandered to the smoking room, where, as he had surmised, he discovered four masked men playing poker. It was not difficult to see that Cabanas was one of them, for his mask was tilted and showed his pointed Vandyke beard. As Norroy watched them, without revealing his

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identity, another man came in. It was young Beau Brummell. He remained but for a moment, then made his exit.

It seemed as though the music for the next dance would never begin, but, when it did, Norroy again sought the conservatory. As his tall figure came into view, the silk-knick-erbockered figure of Mona Larrabee rose from the bay window.

She cast a careful glance around, then caught Norroy's arm. "She is going to leave the ballroom after this dance. She is going to her room and change her dress for a traveling suit. He went into the smoking room and found her husband playing cards; told her he was good for the small hours. Then he said that while everybody was engaged—servants and all—they could slip out without being noticed. He has his automobile in a little outhouse down by the turnpike, and they'll walk to that, then ride to the station in the auto. Oh, how can a woman do a thing like that!" The girl paused for a moment. "But, really, Yorke," she

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said, very seriously, "I don't think she would have consented if she had taken less of the punch—really I don't."

Norroy held out his hand. "Mona, you're a brave little girl. You've prevented this from happening—the credit is more yours than mine."

"But who will prevent it? How? You don't want to have a disgraceful scene?"

"There will be no scene. Where will they meet when they have changed their clothes?"

"He is coming to her room at one o'clock. She will be ready then. How are you going to prevent it, Yorke?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow morning, Mona. Now give me your word again that you will not breathe a word of this."

"Have I said a word—yet?"

"No—but—"

"Well, I won't. Now that's settled, Yorke. Suppose we dance this waltz?"

They whirled in on the polished floor to the music of the "Valse Bleue." When

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the strains had died away, they made their way back to the conservatory. But there was no sign of a pink Watteau shepherdess there, nor was Beau Brummell visible. The morning room revealed neither of them, nor did the smoking room, into which Yorke Norroy ventured alone.

He rejoined Mona a few moments later. "Well, I'm off, Mona," he said. "I will see you in the morning. And so will Mrs. de Cabanas and Gilbert Clayton."

"But how, Yorke?" she asked, eagerly.

"Keep mum." He laid his finger on his lip. "And wait. Perhaps I may be able to tell you an hour from now. Wait until then, at any rate. The affair won't be over until three, at least. Wait until then. And now, for the moment, *adios*."

He left the morning room and ascended the stairs which led to his apartment.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORKING OUT OF THE PLOT.

When Norroy reached his own room he switched on the electric light for but a single moment. In that moment he possessed himself of a very minute Remington revolver, and took the skeleton key from the tail pocket of the claw-hammer coat which lay across a chair. Then he glanced at his watch, and saw that it was ten minutes to one. He extinguished the light, opened his door a trifle and knelt down by the opening. He could see faint rays of light through a crack in the door of Mrs. de Cabanas' room, and he knew, from several bumps and jars that he heard, that she was tossing articles about the room—evidently packing.

It was pitchy black in the passage-way, for Norroy had taken the precaution to switch off the electric current that communi-

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cated with the chandelier near his own room. Save for the occasional jolt from Mrs. de Cabanas' room, it was also very quiet. Norroy waited.

Presently the sound of footsteps coming down the hall could be heard—though the footsteps were very light, and the pedestrian seemed to be treading softly. They stopped before Mrs. de Cabanas' door, and Norroy could faintly distinguish a man's form. Then came a light tap—followed by two louder ones—on the door. A moment passed. The man tapped again. Cautiously the door was opened.

"I am not ready," said a woman's voice. "I am not ready. Go away."

"Go away?" came in Clayton's tones. "No, no, Cecilia, let me in."

"I can't. I won't. Come back later. You can't come in." The door was closing when Clayton threw his shoulder against it and it flew open—a great flare of light in the darkness showing Mrs. de Cabanas attired in a gray traveling dress.

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There was an angry protestation, and the door closed again. But this time Clayton was on the inside of it. Norroy heard a key turn in the lock.

For a moment he cogitated. Then he saw that this action on Clayton's part had made his own plan far easier than before. With a grim smile, Norroy arose in the darkness and took down the telephone receiver.

"Hello—yes, Miss Grey—give me the smoking room, please." There was a whirr, and some one growled out: "Well—who's this?"

Norroy's ability to mimic the tones of others was never better displayed. "I want to speak to Senor de Cabanas," he said weakly, and in the tones of a woman in pain. "His wife." "Oh—excuse me, senora," said the voice at the other end, more civilly. A silence, and then the tones of the Andevian broke the silence, inquiring in Spanish as to the wants of his wife. "I am ill—I have gone to my room—I am very sick—come—at once," was the reply, in Mrs. de

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Cabanas' voice.

With another smile, which almost threatened to become a chuckle, Norroy placed the receiver on its hook and crossed the passageway into the bathroom. He fitted the skeleton key in the door and opened it noiselessly, coming into contact with the portieres. Clayton was speaking.

"We can't put off going. It's to-night or never! You *must* go, Cecilia—you must go!"

"What right had you to come in here?" she demanded. "What right? This is my husband's room and mine."

"You promised me you would go to-night. The special car will be ready for us. We can slip out, and no one will be the wiser. My automobile is waiting——"

"I can't, Gilbert—oh, I can't!" She was weakening. But that she was sorry that she had made the promise was evident. "Gilbert, I can't. I was foolish when I made that promise. I couldn't face the world. We've done nothing yet that can't be re-

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trieved. I have been faithful—but if we go—I couldn't stand it. No, Gilbert, you had better go—you had better go!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort," he cried, fiercely. "Nothing of the sort!"

"Ssh—ssh," she interrupted. "What's that?"

The sound of some one running rapidly down the hall came to their ears. "Oh, what is it, Gilbert? Who is it?"

"I don't know," he returned, sullenly. "It doesn't concern us, anyway."

The footsteps stopped before the door, and some one turned the knob. But the door was locked, and failed to yield.

The woman staggered back across the room. Clayton faced the door fiercely.

"Open the door, Cecilia," came the tones of the ambassador from Andevia.

"My husband!" the words came out in a tense whisper. "My husband—my husband —"

"I have come, dearest," continued Cabanas, outside. "I have come. Dr. Rand

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will be here in a moment."

As though sustained by a sudden stimulant, the woman rushed across the room and opened the window without noise.

"Jump out—jump out, Gilbert!" she whispered. "It opens on the creek. You will only be wetted a trifle. You can swim. Jump—jump—oh, my God! if he should find you here——"

"I won't jump," said Clayton, firmly. "I won't jump. Let him come in and find me."

The sound of other footsteps coming up the hall were now to be heard, and presently Cabanas spoke to some one in a hoarse tone.

"She doesn't answer, Rand," he said. "She must have had one of her fainting spells. If she isn't revived, it may be dangerous. I haven't a key—what shall we do?"

"Why, break down the door, of course," said Rand, the surgeon, in a matter-of-fact tone.

Without hesitation, Cabanas thrust his

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shoulder against the door. But it was of strong wood and did not yield. "Wait, I'll get a poker from my fireplace," said Rand, again.

But Cabanas still continued to push against the stout oak, and the door creaked under the pressure.

"Jump!" whispered Cecilia de Cabanas again. "Oh, Gilbert, jump!"

"No!" he cried. "I'll open the door—and open his eyes at the same time. Then you must leave with me." He started toward the door. The woman clung to him.

"Stop—stop!" she panted. "Stop!"

He turned to shake her off, and at the same moment saw the portieres part and a tall, slender figure in black silk tights of the Elizabethan period appear. In one hand the masker held a small Remington revolver.

"When a lady asks a favor you should accede. Now, don't argue the question. Go into that room—quick!"

"I'll do nothing of the—" What Clay-

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ton intended to say was never quite clear, for the moment his lips parted for speech, the lithe form in black hurled itself against him, and, catching him about the neck in the crook of his elbow, Norroy whirled him about to the entrance of the little room. Then, without the slightest hesitation, the secret agent brought the butt of the Remington down on Clayton's head, and the young fellow became limp in his arms. Norroy pushed him into the bathroom and turned to the woman, who stood white and ghastly in the moonlight, her hands covering her face.

"Mrs. de Cabanas," said Norroy, evenly, and in a voice which was not his own, "who I am does not matter. I am your friend, for this once at least. I knew of your intention to run away with young Clayton. This is my means for preventing it. A few moments ago, by feigning your voice, I called up your husband on the telephone, and, pretending to be you, told him that I was very ill."

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As he spoke, the crash of a heavy instrument on the door was heard.

"He has brought a doctor. I leave the illness for you to explain. I'll look after young Clayton, and, so long as you continue to avoid him, you can trust me that this story will never be made public."

At the second blow of the poker he closed the door hastily, and locked it from the bathroom side. Then, in the darkness of the bath, he heard the blows continue.

The ambassador's wife, her wits working, lost no time.

She hastily tore off the traveling dress and threw it into a closet. Her bags, which she had been packing, she threw after it, and, pulling on a lace-embroidered *robe de chambre*, she crawled into the bed and beneath the coverlet. By a quick jerk of the fingers, she pulled the pins from her elaborate *coiffure*, her hair falling in confusion over her shoulders. The next moment the door crashed in, and Cabanas switched on the electric lights.

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At the sight of her on the bed, he rushed to her side. "Dearest, dearest—what is wrong?" he cried. "Are you ill?" His tones showed the deepest throes of emotion.

She opened her eyes slowly. "Oh—oh——" she murmured, then stretched her arms.

"Are you sick, *carissima*?" he cried again. "Ah, Bonita, Bonita, are you ill?"

"No, my husband," she said, softly. "Not now. I *was* ill. I am well now—I am well now, Eugenio."

For the first time realizing what she had so narrowly averted, the satisfaction of still being one who was faithful came to her with sudden gladness. "Oh, my husband!" she sobbed, in his arms.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

“Well,” continued Norroy, when he had reached that stage of the story, “I spent a vigil of about an hour in that accursed bathroom, after which things quieted down, and I carried young Clayton to his own room and laid him down on his bed. I knew that there would be no doubt of his remaining in his room, but I took the precaution to lock him in and leave the key on the outside of the door. Then I returned to the ballroom and told little Mona Larrabee all that was needful for her to know. I couldn’t avoid that. She knew too much already, and there was no way of letting her out of it. She has given me her promise about it, and I think she’ll keep her word.”

“And how did Clayton take it?”

“He raised a howl in the morning about

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being locked in, but the men chaffed him about being drunk and having a trick played on him. He didn't say much, and the lump on his head he did not even take the trouble to lie about. He was waiting to see Mrs. de Cabanas. She came down to a late breakfast, and, hang me, if her husband didn't dance attention on her the whole day. But she managed to get a word in with young Clayton at some period, for he kept religiously away from her after that, and did not turn his head whenever her husband came his way. In fact, he took Cabanas' place in the poker game when Mrs. de C. sent for Eugenio. I heard him say at the dinner that this was his last Christmas in the United States—so I suppose he'll throw up his secretaryship. It's the only decent thing for him to do."

"He resigned to-day," said the secretary, pointing to a notice from the Andevian legation. "And thanks to——"

Norroy held up his hand. "Only partly," he insisted. "That little Larrabee girl is

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to be thanked as much as I." He lighted a cigarette. "And now, with your permission, Mr. Secretary, I think I'll keep an appointment to play golf with her—at Chevy Chase. Coming out this afternoon? Oh, well, then, I'll have the pleasure of introducing you."

The Friend of the Chief Executive.

CHAPTER I.

VON LADENBURG REDIVIVUS.

When Harkins, the valet of the secretary of state, brought in the card of Mr. Yorke Norroy, his master was engaged in exchanging his morning attire for that of the afternoon. He had scarcely begun, and Harkins had never before known him to hurry quite so much over his toilet as he did at that time. When fully dressed, he failed even to gaze at his mirrored resemblance, nor did he wait for the *bouttonniere* which the valet had ready for him.

The secretary, in fact, was very much pre-

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occupied. Three weeks before he had consulted with Yorke Norroy in regard to a leakage in the State department. For the second time his carefully laid schemes with regard to a certain very important matter had gone completely awry, all due to the fact that a certain European power, concerned very much in the affair, had evidently been made aware of them previously.

There had been informers in the State department before, but these had been simply petty scoundrels who knew nothing save the merest tag-ends. Their complicity in the business had been easily discovered, and they had been discharged "for the good of the service."

But this affair was not the matter of a clerk, a stenographer, or a messenger. Whosoever it might be, it was certainly a man holding a confidential office—an official. The secretary had imagined he was surrounded by faithful men worthy of the high trust which he reposed in them; certainly he had not the faintest suspicion of any of them.

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Yet one of them must be guilty.

At this juncture he had called into service Yorke Norroy, just returned from Russia, successful, as was his wont. Mr. Norroy had accepted the commission with his usual nonchalance, and had declared that it should have his undivided attention. Yet the newspapers still continued to record his presence at receptions, cotillions, dinners, and theater parties.

He had not communicated with the secretary during the time that had elapsed between the giving of the commission and now. Yet evidently he had remained in Washington the whole period, and kept fairly close to the Connecticut Avenue and Dupont Circle neighborhoods.

No matter what important matter might chain his wits, Yorke Norroy never forgot to be correct in every little detail of his attire. His slender frame was attired in a frock coat which seemed to have been ironed on him, and gray trousers, gracefully full and creased knifishly.

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When the secretary entered, Norroy was inspecting the toe of a very small patent leather boot, which encased his right foot and which had been slightly scratched. He was frowning on this defect, and did not hear the secretary when he came in.

The sound of the voice of the head of the State department aroused him from his pedal meditations, and he stretched out his thin, tapering hand in welcome. The secretary took it and pressed it warmly. He had a sincere affection for Norroy, and a great belief in him.

"I think I have found the leak," said Norroy, carefully, as he lighted one of his ever-present cigarettes of the gold crest; "in fact, it has gone a little beyond thought. I am sure of him."

"You mean that?" The secretary's tone was almost eager. "Whom do you suspect?"

Norroy held up his hand, protestingly. "Just a moment, Mr. Secretary, please! Remember I have not really any proof

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against the man—not a shred. But there are other things beside legal proof, as we know. There were four men who had your confidence to the extent which made it possible for them to know what has been given away. In the past three weeks I have devoted a great deal of my time to keeping track of these four men, with the result—as is generally the case—that the man whom I suspected least has apparently turned out to be the traitor.

“I was first attracted to him by the fact that he had been in the habit of going over to Baltimore on an average of three times a week. This was only four days ago. Up to that time I had no reason whatever to suspect him. But the persistent visits to Baltimore became a trifle suspicious. Consequently, several nights ago I was on the same train that landed him at Mount Royal station, only he was in the Pullman, while I took the chair coach, in order to prevent his seeing me. Naturally, I was in disguise, but, disguise or not, if he saw the same man

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too often, I knew he would be on the watch—if he were guilty.

“He took a cab at the station and gave an address on Charles Street. I knew the neighborhood, and was afraid at the time that my theory had a hole in it. Nevertheless, I followed him in a second cab, promising the driver an extra fee if he kept the other in sight. When the driver of the first cab got into the block on Charles Street corresponding with the number given, his fare put his head out and gave other directions. So we were driven into a little side street, demi-fashionable and very quiet.

“He alighted in front of No. 156. I stopped my cab at the next corner and walked back. I found that 156 was the residence of the Saxonian consul.”

The secretary uttered a sudden exclamation.

“That certainly seemed to be good ground for my suspicions. I walked around the block and inspected it, finally finding a house nearly opposite the one this man had en-

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tered, which advertised 'Rooms to Let.' I rang the bell and engaged a room—one overlooking the street and, incidentally, the Saxonian consul's house.

"It was Saturday night and the stores were all open, so I went down-town, purchased a cheap suit case and a few toilet articles, and returned to the room that I had engaged. I was forced to pay a month in advance before they would trust me, but all preliminaries over, I was installed.

"While I was down-town my quarry had evidently returned to Washington, for his cab was gone. But that was nothing, for my cue was to watch the house. Sunday I spent in close confinement in that room, and in the morning I saw a number of people come out of the consul's place. I marked them all, but did not judge any of them to be the man I wanted. I was perfectly sure that Saxonia had sent one of her cleverest secret agents to play this game, and, as I know a number of them by sight, I wanted to see which one was receiving the news.

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"Late in the afternoon I had my reward. I was keeping my binoculars—I bought a cheap pair for the occasion—trained on the door most of the time, and when anyone passed I leveled it on his face. And whom do you imagine it was?"

"Ehricke?" hazarded the secretary.

Norroy shook his head.

"Not Von Ladenburg?"

"Herman von Ladenburg," affirmed Norroy. He drummed on the table with his tapered fingers and watched the secretary's face. "Herman von Ladenburg," he repeated, with a ring of triumph in his voice.

"I should have imagined that Saxonia would be rather afraid to send him to the United States," commented the secretary. "Was he disguised?"

"He was not disguised. He came out in company with the consul's daughter, and they evidently went on the Charles Street stroll. I waited until that night. Our friend came again. That was enough for me—to start on."

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"But who is this you speak of?" queried the secretary.

"Arthur Kennedy," replied Norroy, calmly.

He lighted another cigarette and began to blow rings, as though the making of these airy festoons were the most important of avocations.

"Arthur Kennedy!" almost choked the secretary. "Arthur Kennedy!"

Norroy waited until the secretary had mastered his emotion. "No other," he declared. "Do you blame me for not suspecting him at first?"

"If I did not know you so well, Norroy, I would blame you for suspecting him at all. Do you know that Kennedy was in the war with the President? That he is one of his friends—his personal friends? There is hardly a man in the diplomatic service that the President likes so well; it was he who put Kennedy in office, you remember?"

"Mr. Secretary," drawled Norroy, "do you imagine that I allowed Kennedy's con-

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nections to escape me? I know all there is to know about him, I fancy. That was part of the game."

"But are you absolutely certain?" The secretary's tone was still a trifle protesting.

The secret agent flicked the ashes from the tip of his cigarette. "A few moments ago you said you knew me quite well. That being the case, you know I say nothing of which I am not absolutely certain. I have not said Kennedy was guilty of anything except visiting a house in which resides a secret agent of Saxonia, whose presence I have yet to know yields anything but harm to the country in which he happens to be residing."

"You realize, then, that you have no proof, and also that such a story told the President would be instantly discredited?"

Norroy smiled tolerantly. "Considering my personal and official acquaintance with the President, I know him well enough for that. The whole situation lies thus: We have no proof against Kennedy. We can-

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not remove him from office without the President's say-so. It is evident that the President will not give it on the thin evidence adduced. So long as Kennedy remains in office, just so long the information will continue to go to Von Ladenburg, assuming that Kennedy is guilty—a mere hypothesis. The moment we show a suspicion, Kennedy will be off."

The secretary looked perplexed, even worried. "What then, Norroy?" he wished to know.

Norroy hitched his chair a few lengths nearer that of the secretary, and, bending forward in the closest proximity consistent with comfort, outlined his plans in a very low tone.

The secretary listened intently, some doubt apparent on his countenance.

When Norroy had concluded, and was rubbing his thin fingers together, examining them minutely for some trace of uncleanness, the secretary said nothing, but gazed at some papers on his table with a preoc-

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cupied air.

The secret agent recognized immediately that something was troubling his chief. He finally raised his eyes and asked as to the reason for silence.

The secretary cleared his throat. "You know the President, Norroy," he said; "you know how much he dislikes what he terms 'the chicanery of the State department,' and how he insists that this country should not stoop to the same machinations as other powers. This is the case of his own personal friend, and——"

Norroy spread out his delicate hands in an expostulatory manner. "It is safe—perfectly safe. I see no other way." His tone was indifferent, and he spoke as though the topic concerned him not at all.

The secretary sighed. "I suppose I can persuade the President," he said; "although I incur the risk of falling very deeply into his bad graces if your suspicions are not verified. You say you want Von Ladenburg's photograph?"

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"I do," agreed Norroy. "You have it here, if I am not mistaken. I obtained it for you in 1900, when I was in Berlin."

"I have it here, if any place," returned the secretary. "But, at all events, you know Von Ladenburg's face well enough without it. Of course it would be an aid. I'll see if I have it."

He unlocked a private drawer in his *es-critoire* and took out a bunch of keys. Selecting one of them, he opened an innocent-looking cupboard, which hid from view a large iron safe built into the wall. He twirled the knob about several times until the combination was formed, and the safe door swung open. From a locked compartment within he took out a bundle of photographs—pictures of foreign-looking persons of all nationalities, some in gaudy uniforms, some in plain dress, but all with the same shrewd, keen expression of countenance. He selected one after a prolonged search, and handed it to Norroy, after which he locked the various doors, and returned

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the keys to their place.

"Let me look at it again," said the secretary.

He gazed at it, mentally comparing the pictured form with that of the man who stood before him. Then he sighed, and handed it back.

"You may be able to do it. I know your knack of disguises. Your height is about the same as his, but his girth is nearly twice yours. However——"

"We will see," finished Norroy. "The performance will begin at nine." He smiled. "I will need two trusty men. One must be able to speak good German—Wammell should do for that, I fancy. I had him on the Legieux case, you remember? And Henry Coman will do for the second. Will you send them to my apartments, at——" He examined his watch. "Four o'clock, please?"

The secretary noted the names. Norroy picked up his swagger stick and gloves.

"Until nine, Mr. Secretary," he said.

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Lighting another cigarette, and gracefully saluting his chief with the case, he made his exit.

CHAPTER II.

THE METHODS OF YORKE NORROY.

"Mr. Williams will see you in a moment, sir," said the office boy, as he pushed forward a chair for Norroy. "He told me to ask you to kindly wait."

There was no sign on the glass-paned door of the little antechamber which opened on the office of Homer Williams—nothing to indicate the occupation of the man who rented the rather expensive rooms. Yet every hour of the day saw passing in and out people whose names were familiar to the reading public through the medium of the news columns. They did not state their business to the placid-looking youth who mounted guard, nor had this youth a very tangible idea of the status of his employer, or the reasons that led these celebrities to consult him.

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Homer Williams was, without doubt, a master in his own peculiar line—a line so far removed from the average profession that he was not in any danger of losing his patronage through rivalry. His talent lay in the matter of handwriting. To him came bank employees with checks which they had reason to believe were doubtfully signed; lawyers needing proof that certain documents held by opponents were fraudulent; society folk who had taken up the fad of reading character through chirography; and many other manners and conditions of men and women.

Within the prescribed moment the door to Williams' office opened and a rather corpulent man passed out. Norroy turned his head hastily to avoid recognition, and when the outer door had shut upon his last client Williams spoke the secret agent's name.

Norroy took the outstretched hand and accepted the invitation to enter the artistically furnished room which served the chirographic expert as a *sanctum sanc-*

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torum. The diplomat seated himself in a comfortable Morris chair and offered Williams his cigarette case. Williams accepted, and reciprocated with a light, and for a short space the two men eyed each other.

"It has been some time since I have had the honor, Mr. Norroy," observed Williams. "Something exceptionally interesting to hand, I suppose—as usual?"

Norroy snapped the catch to his cigarette case and replaced it in his pocket. Then he returned Williams' gaze of inquiry.

"Well—rather," he returned. "You will pardon non-explanation, won't you?"

"I am not naturally inquisitive," returned Williams, readjusting his scarf in the glass opposite. "I need only enough to work on."

The diplomat threw back the folds of his outer coat, and, feeling within an inner pocket of his frock, brought out a Japanese pocket case, ornamented with neolithic dragons, from a compartment of which he took a small envelope.

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"Here is a specimen of the handwriting of Herman von Ladenburg," said Norroy, giving the envelope to the chirographer. "It is a note which he wrote to me some time ago."

"But it is addressed to 'Herr Wolfgang von——'"

"Quite so, Mr. Williams," interposed Norroy.

Williams looked at him half humorously, and then inspected the paper. "A strong, aggressive handwriting," he remarked.

"That is 'Exhibit A,'" said Norroy. He drew a folded paper from the pocketbook. "This is 'Exhibit B.'" He held it up. "As you will note, it was written to-day, for the ink is still blue. Also, as you know my handwriting, you will readily see that it is written by me. It is in German. I will translate:

Dear Mr. Kennedy: Important discoveries of to-day have made it necessary for me to come to Washington. I must see you at once. The man who delivers this note may be trusted. He will bring you to me. Do not hesitate to accede to whatever he may request, and

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do not stand upon the order of your coming, but come at once.

Herman von Ladenburg.

Five o'clock. Wednesday.

Norroy folded up the paper again. Williams was scrutinizing the signature of the Bogota note.

"You catch my meaning, Mr. Williams?" queried Norroy, tapping lightly on the paper in one hand with the tapering fingers of the other, and looking squarely into Williams' eyes.

Williams wrinkled his brow, and avoided Norroy's gaze. "I should prefer that you state explicitly, Mr. Norroy," he said.

Norroy sighed. "If I must—I suppose I must. In plain words, I want the note which I have just read copied in the handwriting of that one." He pointed to the Bogota epistle. "More than that, I must have it at four o'clock this afternoon. You are quite able to do it, are you not?"

The chirographic expert laughed uneasily. "Oh, I dare say," he agreed. "Oh, I dare say, but"—he paused, as though about to

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take a nasty morsel—"it is forgery, you know?"

The secret diplomat dropped his cigarette in the ash tray and brushed a few flecks of dust from his coat.

"You know me well enough to know I have good reasons for what I want done. I can't argue the question with you, nor can I explain any further. Will you undertake it?"

He mentioned the sum to be paid: a fair figure. Williams hesitated—and was lost, for it went against the grain to refuse to do such a piece of work, so easily accomplished, and for which the remuneration was more than adequate.

"Yes," he agreed, slowly, and with the appearance of reluctance; "I'll do it; but only because it is you who ask me, Mr. Norroy. I don't care to establish a reputation for doing that sort of thing. It isn't healthful. And I need hardly say I don't want the fact that I have done it mentioned."

Norroy's teeth snapped together. "It is

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hardly part of my code of ethics to tell anything not positively necessary," he said. "You need not fear on that score where I am concerned."

He produced a check book and filled up one of the blanks, which he gave to Williams. Then, from another pocket, he took some sheets of paper and envelopes to match.

"Official paper of the Saxonian Foreign Office," he said, briefly. "They have the crest and watermark. The copy is to be made on one of them and the envelope addressed to——" He picked up a pencil and wrote on a memorandum pad:

Hon. Arthur M. J. Kennedy,
The Pendleton,
1912 J. Street, N. W.

He laid aside the pencil and stood with his back to the fireplace, gazing down with marked disapprobation on the scratch which marred the polished surface of one of his boots. "Destroy the original draft in my handwriting when you have copied it, and

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destroy that"—he pointed to the address he had just written—"but return me the original Von Ladenburg note. It is a souvenir." He smiled slightly. "Return it with your copy of mine."

After a few more words he bade Williams good-day, and quitted the office building. He turned into F. Street and passed leisurely along, bowing to many men, and lifting his gray sombrero to more women; with some of the latter he stopped to chat for short periods, then strolled on.

At Thirteenth Street he debouched into Pennsylvania Avenue. He stopped before the stage entrance of the National Theater, lighted another cigarette, and passed in on the stage, where scantily attired women in dress rehearsal were being taught new terpsichorean effects by the ballet master. Norroy singled out the press agent of the theater from among a number of men on the O. P. side of the stage. He crossed and spoke to him.

"Why, it's Mr. Yorke Norroy!" said the

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gentleman of the pen and "dog" story, loudly enough for those in near proximity to hear. Several of the *coryphées* standing near by craned their necks for a view of the gentleman whose name was coupled so often with others who had been known to "angel" productions for struggling maidens with cravings for the high lights and the center of the stage.

But Norroy appeared to be absolutely oblivious to the many charms so lavishly displayed. "Where can I find Penniman?" he asked the press agent. Penniman was the "make-up" man of the theater, an artist in his way, and invaluable when shows requiring numbers of supernumeraries played there. Even leading lights in the profession of histrionics were not averse to taking suggestions from Penniman.

"Penniman—why, he's down in the main dressing room giving some 'broilers' hints on how to be beautiful from behind the lamps. Shall I call him?"

"I wish you would." The press agent

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dispatched one of the stage hands on the errand, and the fellow returned followed by a lean, wrinkled old man with stained fingers, loosely fitting black clothes, and a big bow of black silk tied under a huge Byronic collar.

Norroy held out his hand, and the "make-up man" greeted him effusively. The old fellow cared little for Norroy's social position, admiring him from a professional standpoint solely. Norroy had often called for Penniman's assistance in the amateur theatricals which had gained the secret agent a reputation, and it was one of Penniman's sorrows that Norroy would not embrace the stage as a profession.

"I've been with Booth, sir, and with Lawrence Barrett, sir," he had been wont to say. "I've seen John McCullough from no further than you stand now, and I've helped make up the elder Salvini every night for weeks. And I've seen their imitators—for they have no successors, sir. I know an *actor* when I see one—a real actor, no pretty

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boy that the girls go wild over because he has a soft voice and a Piccadilly accent—I say I know an *actor*, sir—and you are one, if there ever was one. It's none of my affairs, Mr. Norroy, but *why* don't you go in to the profession?" This had been his oft-repeated wail, but he had discontinued it as he saw it was without effect.

Norroy consulted his watch. "It's after two o'clock, Penniman," he said; "and I haven't had my lunch. Have you? No? Well, it's time you had, then. Come up to my rooms and break bread with me, will you? I wish you would. I want to talk with you about something very important."

The old man acceded, and followed the secret agent out of the stage door, leaving the "lydies" of the chorus in a state of indignation. Norroy's cold eyes had swept their ranks in much the same way he would have surveyed a line of soldiers, except that there was less interest in the gaze.

"No business until after lunch, Penniman," said the secret agent, when they were

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seated in his breakfast room, with old Jefferson, Norroy's darky, serving as epicurean a lunch as might be partaken of in Washington. "What were you saying about the Siddons' death mask?"

The old man, given a chance to converse on his hobby, talked volubly and entertainingly, Norroy making observations and putting questions which showed him to be fully conversant with the subject in hand.

When they had lunched, old Jefferson swung back the doors of the library, and, after placing coffee, liqueurs and cigarettes on a little tabouret near both men, withdrew.

The conversation continued on the same lines until the cigarettes had been finished; then Norroy drew from his pocket the photograph he had obtained from the secretary of state earlier in the day.

"Do you notice that particularly, Penniman?" queried the secret agent, as he handed the pasteboard to the "make-up" man. "That is to be my latest development in the

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way of Thespian disguises."

The old man studied the portrait carefully. Norroy continued:

"I want to make up in such a way that people knowing that man well would be unable to say that I am not he. I know his tones and can imitate them——"

"That you can—you can imitate anything," broke in Penniman, admiringly. "Only one as good, and that Miss Loftus."

Norroy frowned at the interruption.

"I am approximately the same height. For the rest of the resemblance I depend on you. I know something about make-up, of course, but this affair is rather too delicate for me to handle—or I think it is. I might possibly make shift to do it; but why try my amateurish hand when you are in town?"

Penniman murmured something indistinctly but gratefully.

"I have the wig and cosmetics—also the padding. For the rest, I depend on you."

Penniman looked from the pictured face

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to the real, and shook his head a trifle dubiously.

"Is this for the stage, Mr. Norroy?" he inquired. "Not to be prying into your affairs, but faces seen from the stage and from the same level—it's different, you know."

"Yes, I know," agreed the secret agent. "No, it is not for the stage."

"Then it will take fully an hour to get a fair resemblance."

Norroy glanced at the clock. "I have an appointment at four," he observed. "I suppose you can make it by then?"

The alterer of countenances nodded, and Norroy raised the hangings of a couch, disclosing a locked box. He removed draperies and pillow, and raised the top, after unlocking. Within, arranged in compartments, were all the articles used in facial beautification or distortion. The old man had used the box before and knew the approximate placing of each article. He selected brushes, grease paints, and other things necessary for his work. Norroy removed coat, vest and

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collar, sitting back in a Morris chair.

It was a tedious operation, but was enlivened by the stories Penniman told. Soon after the second hand of the clock had passed the dividing point between the hours of three and four, Penniman handed Norroy a hand-glass. The secret agent saw in it such a perfect facial resemblance to the man of the picture that, for the moment, he scarcely realized that he was gazing at his own countenance.

"And now for the figure," he said, after congratulating Penniman on his success. "I have a suit of clothes here, made in Berlin on the approved Teutonic style, and which I used once when I padded for a German part. We will use that."

Fifteen minutes later Norroy was looking at a full-fledged German in brown clothes, cloth-topped shoes, a flaring collar and wooden-like bow tie, with a rimless monocle stuck in his right eye—and it was his own reflection that he saw in the pier glass.

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“*Parfaitement!*” he exclaimed. He never allowed himself to be enthusiastic in English.

There was a knock on the door, and old Jefferson entered, carrying two cards on his tray. He glanced from old Penniman to the excessively foreign-looking person.

“Ah—ah begs parding,” he said. “Ah thought Marse Yohke was heah.”

“What do you want, Jeff?” The voice of his master came from the German’s throat. Jefferson had seen Yorke Norroy disguised before, and the voice reassured him. He handed Norroy the cards.

“De gen’l’men is outside, sah,” he informed him.

“Tell them I will see them in a moment.”

The negro retired, and Norroy gave Penniman a bank note. “Thank you many times. Oh, yes, you must take it. And now—if you will excuse me! I hope to see you soon again.”

Norroy raised his voice and bade Jeff show Mr. Penniman out, and Messrs. Co-

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man and Wammell in. His orders were obeyed, and the two men entered. Their faces showed little of individual characteristics; there was not a peculiarity in the way of personality which could be used in a description of them to change it materially from a description of a thousand others, save that both had the keen eyes characteristic of their profession.

"I don't recognize you, Mr. Norroy," said Coman, the elder of the two; "but I suppose there's no mistake as to your identity. We had orders to report here at four o'clock for service under you. That is, if I am not mistaken in addressing Mr. Yorke Norroy, although I must say I would never have known you."

Norroy took the monocle from his eye, and invited his visitors to be seated. "Well, that is what I have striven for," he said, carelessly. "And, as you know, it is part of the game." He placed the Scotch and a siphon on the table and passed the cigarettes. In a few moments he had briefly outlined the

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plan to be pursued.

"You speak German well enough to pose as one, I believe?" he said, addressing Wammell.

Wammell verified the statement.

"So I remembered from our experience together in the Legieux case," continued Norroy. "At six o'clock, then, you will go to the Pendleton and sit in the park opposite. Coman will wait at the end of the square with a cab. You will drive it, of course, Mr. Coman; we want no outside people. Wait in the park until eight o'clock, unless Mr. Kennedy comes out before that time. In case he does, you are to immediately cross the street and hand him this letter."

Norroy gave him the note which Williams had sent to him a few minutes before.

"If Mr. Kennedy does not come out, at eight you will go to his rooms and tell his servant that you are from 156 Orange St., Baltimore." Wammell noted the number on his cuff. "If I am not mistaken, Mr.

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Kennedy will see you on receipt of that message, and when he grants you the audience, give him the note which I have just given you. Explain to him that the whereabouts of Graf von Ladenburg are secret, and that the graf has given orders that Mr. Kennedy must be blindfolded. It is not necessary to tell him about the blindfolding, however, until you get him into the cab. Drive him around for about half an hour, to give him the impression that he is going to a rather distant place. About eight-forty drive into the rear carriageway of the White House grounds."

Both of the men uttered involuntary exclamations.

"Of the White House grounds," repeated Norroy. "There will be a man at the gate to open it at that time. Drive the cab through the *porte-cochere* and into the stable yard. There will be a man there who will open a trapdoor in the stable floor, and let you into the cellar. There is an entrance into the cellar in the room where you will

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take him, and I will be in that room and will have the trapdoor open at exactly nine o'clock. When you have left him in the room, you will go back to the cellar and wait until I call you. If I do not call you within an hour's time, you may return home."

Some further details were given them, and Wammell was especially drilled on the conversation which he was to hold with Kennedy on giving the note. Then Norroy requested both men to repeat their instructions, and they did so to his satisfaction.

"Remember your German when you speak to Kennedy. You might alter your face and make it a little more Teutonic in appearance. An upturned yellow mustache will give the desired effect."

Wammell murmured compliance. Norroy rose.

"Very well, I shall expect you and your charge at nine o'clock precisely. Remember that this is a very important case, and it is a mark of high trust that you have been selected to carry it out. Until nine, then."

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When Jeff came in, after showing the visitors to the door, Norroy informed him that he was at home to no one, and ordered a dinner to be prepared for himself alone.

CHAPTER III.

TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE PRESIDENT.

Mr. Yorke Norroy was fidgeting restlessly in one of the private rooms of the White House. It was after nine o'clock, and, as yet, he had seen nothing of the two agents and their charge. But it would be an injustice to Norroy to refer to him by his own cognomen at this particular time, for there was nothing in the personality and actions of the German looking person who sat alone in the room to remind even his best friend of the Washington cotillion leader.

Norroy's changes of identity did not stop with the alteration of figure and countenance. He entered into the character he assumed, and sank his own identity in it. For that reason, Mr. Norroy was not smoking cigarettes which were so much a part of his daily life. He held between thumb

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and forefinger, in the exact manner of Von Ladenburg, a very black, very thick cigar, and he smoked it without any appearance of enjoyment.

There was a gaping void in the center of the room, marking the entrance from the cellar. Norroy had raised the trap some five minutes before. Now he heard footsteps on the secret stairs leading upward. His face showed signs of pleasure, but he quickly banished them, resuming the stolid Teutonic stare which was a part of the make-up of Herman von Ladenburg.

Norroy crossed the room and pressed an electric button connecting with the President's private library. Then he switched off the electric lights, leaving the room in the half light of the yellow-shaded lamp. A moment later a head appeared from the cellar entrance. It was Coman's. He looked at Norroy inquiringly, and the secret diplomat nodded. The head disappeared, but came to view again almost immediately, followed by the body and a hand, leading an-

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other, who was blindfolded.

The man in question was rather tall and heavily built. He was attired in the sack clothes, remarkable for their extreme cut, which marked the too earnest follower of the bizarre fashions of the hour. His large frame was out of place in the short curling coat, tightly fitting at the waist, and his low shoes were ornamented with enormous pieces of black silk ribbon, which served as bows.

Norroy waved his hand and Coman disappeared again, closing the trapdoor after him. The secret diplomat crossed the room and untied the bandage about the new arrival's eyes. The man blinked and rubbed his eyelids, then looked at Norroy.

"Ah, Herr Kennedy, you have come," observed Norroy, in the manner of the man who has nothing to say, yet feels that he must say it. "I have been expecting you for some moments."

The other man's eyes, now accustomed to the light, looked at him furtively. "What

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is this place?" he asked.

"I should not have had you blindfolded had I wished you to know where or what it is," replied Norroy. For the first time he realized that Kennedy's eyes were almost fishlike in their shiftiness, and that his ears were set at too low an angle on his head for those of an absolutely honest man.

"This is rather a wonderful proceeding," said Kennedy, looking around the simply furnished room and then seating himself on the side of the reading table opposite to Norroy. "Quite like a swashbuckling novel. I almost imagined I was back in mediæval times when I rode in that hack with the bandage over my eyes. And I must insist that you don't summon me in this way again. I don't like it."

"Secrecy—secrecy is necessary," remarked Norroy. "What would be the result if your connection with me was discovered?"

Kennedy looked uneasily about the room. "See here, Von Ladenburg, what sort of a

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place is this?" He rose and eyed the doors moodily. "Where are we? Is it safe?"

Norroy grunted in an imitation of Von Ladenburg's chuckle. "Safe!" he said, contemptuously. "Do you imagine that I do things that aren't safe? Why did I have you brought here so secretly? For your own good, Kennedy. If anyone in Washington who knew me managed to get a glimpse of my person, the news would fly to the ears of your secretary, and a dozen secret agents would be shadowing me—and I don't like your secret agents, my friend; some of them are too infernally clever."

"Oh, yes," returned Kennedy, carelessly, "we have some clever agents. But I wish to know why you sent for me, Von Ladenburg, and I wish to have this matter over at the earliest possible moment. What do you want?"

"I want to warn you. There is a certain man in the service—a secret agent. He is the same man who worsted me in Colombia. He knows that I am in the United States.

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He knows that I have been stopping with the Saxonian consul. I saw him yesterday on Orange Street, and he passed almost as closely to me as I stand to you."

Kennedy started as though struck violently, then sank into a chair. "Norroy!" he said, fearsomely.

"Yes, Norroy!" repeated the owner of that name. "That is the reason I sent for you—to warn you. I think the warning is needed."

Kennedy rocked to and fro in his chair for a moment. Then, placing his hands on the table, he leaned across, his face very near to the disguised secret agent: "If Norroy is on this, Von Ladenburg," he said, earnestly, "I am quits. I have been in the State department too long not to know that when that dandified devil takes things in hand it is generally all over with the parties he's after. Your warning is good, Von Ladenburg. This is the last meeting you and I will ever have——"

"Impossible!" Norroy broke in. "You

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know I can't leave this thing unfinished as it is. That Meyrick affair came to a head to-day. What of it?"

Kennedy felt in his pockets, and drew out some notes. "This is the last, Von Ladenburg," he said, seriously. "I needed the money, and I needed it badly. But I don't need it so much now that I can afford to figure as a Benedict Arnold in my countrymen's opinions. Here is all I know of the Meyrick case—and it is all there is to know."

Norroy took notes as Kennedy spoke. He was quite familiar with the case, and knew that it interested Saxonia more than any other which had come up for some time. He also knew that for Saxonia to be made aware of the plans of America in this affair meant that America's plans would not be carried out. As he listened, his eyes grew dark and lowering. This treachery was worse than he had anticipated.

When Kennedy finished, Norroy thrust his notes into the pocket of his loose coat.

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For some time he said nothing. He was waiting and listening. He had heard another sound on the steps of the cellar below. For a moment, a glint of amusement displaced the frown. Then came a distinct rap.

"Another visitor," he said. "Will you excuse me for a second, Kennedy?" He raised the trapdoor, and the face of Carson, a third secret agent, appeared.

Carson's eyes took in Kennedy's figure, but Carson was too well disguised for Kennedy to recognize him. To keep up the illusion, he spoke to Norroy in German.

"He came quietly as a lamb at first. He is made up with whiskers and wig—rather palpable. Pennsylvania station at eight sharp. I gave him the word, and then took him to the cab. When I had driven him as far as Indiana Circle, and suggested the bandage, he became suspicious, and I had to knock him on the head. He hasn't come to yet."

Carson was speaking in a whisper, and Kennedy, whose knowledge of spoken Ger-

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man was rather imperfect, did not catch what was said.

"Push him up," said Norroy, curtly.

The next moment an inanimate body was thrust upward and to the floor of the room.

"A whistle and a knock when I need you, Carson," whispered Norroy. The trapdoor shut down again.

Kennedy walked forward, his hand on his revolver pocket and suspicion in his eyes. "What in the devil is this?" he demanded, angrily, touching the body with his foot. "You can't murder people in Washington, Von Ladenburg."

Norroy smiled peculiarly. "This is not murder, Kennedy," he said. "The man is simply senseless, that is all." He moved across the room and laid his hand on the knob of the door. "If you will pardon me!"

As he spoke, he opened the door and passed out of it before Kennedy was aware of his project. Kennedy heard the key turn in the lock. Subconsciously he became

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aware that something had happened which seriously concerned him.

He sat down and lighted a cigar, staring dumbly at the body on the floor. He was endeavoring to figure out exactly what the whole proceeding meant. As yet he had no doubt but that the man he had spoken with was Von Ladenburg, but there was that in Norroy's manner, as he closed the door, which made Kennedy uneasy. He could not determine the object of Von Ladenburg in bringing in the body.

An idea flashed across his mind, but it seemed so silly that he rejected it after a moment's consideration. Still, it gave him uneasiness to even think of it. Suppose Von Ladenburg had killed this man and left him locked in the room with the corpse. It would point to Kennedy as the murderer.

The idea impressed him sufficiently to make him rise and examine the body. He removed the bandage from the eyes. There was something hauntingly familiar about the face, but Kennedy could not exactly

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place it. For one thing, the eyes were closed, robbing the countenance of its natural expression.

Kennedy felt the man's heart nervously. It was still beating. For this he uttered a silent thanksgiving. There was a *carafe* of water on the table and a decanter of brandy. He took both to the side of the prostrate man and forced the liquor between the clinched teeth. Then he bathed the head with the water.

Presently the eyes began to flicker. When they opened and the man stirred, a groan proceeded from his lips and he pressed his hand to his head, where a large contusion showed he had been struck heavily with some blunt weapon. The second sound to come from him was a vigorous "*Donnerwetter!*"

At the sound of the voice, Kennedy's gaze was frozen on the man's face, and the man, looking up, regarded him.

"So!" he said, with a snarl. "It was you, after all." He arose to his feet and threw

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a glance of malevolence at the State department official.

It was now Kennedy's turn to place his hand to his head. Was he dreaming or was he mad? The voice was unmistakable. It was the same voice that had held converse with him a few moments before; the voice of the man who had quitted the room—or, rather, the tones he had affected.

“Good heavens! Who are you?” he cried, wildly.

“Who am I?” growled the other. “Who am I? Confound your impudence, Kennedy! Who am I?” With a sudden movement he jerked off wig and whiskers, and Kennedy found himself looking into the eyes of Herman von Ladenburg.

“Von Ladenburg!” he muttered. “Von Ladenburg!” He arose and walked the room unsteadily. “Von Ladenburg!”

“I am happy you obtain so much pleasure from repeating my name,” said the Saxonian, his teeth clinched and his fingers working convulsively. “Now I want to

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know what in the devil you mean by treating me in this manner. Why did you have me brought here? Eh?"

"I have you brought here?" murmured Kennedy. His mind was a chaotic whirl, and he was now firmly convinced that he had become irrational and was going mad.

The real Von Ladenburg drew a yellow slip from his pocket and put it on the table before Kennedy. "Here is your message in the Saxonian secret code with which I furnished you for urgent dispatches. It tells me to come to Washington on the seven o'clock train, and a trusty man will meet me in the Pennsylvania depot and conduct me to you. The telegram says that my presence is absolutely necessary, and if I do not come it will be serious. So I came. The telegram was in code, and I knew of no one save you who was in possession of that code. The message said a man would meet me at the Pennsylvania station and give the password 'Meyrick.' He gave it, and I went with him. When we had gone a little way

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from the station in the fellow's cab, he proposed that he bind my eyes. I naturally refused, whereupon he struck me a heavy blow with some sort of a stick; and when I became conscious, a moment ago, I find you here."

Kennedy, his hands pressed to his brows, was regarding the speaker without understanding. When Von Ladenburg's utterance was shortly broken off at the finale, the diplomat could only stare at the infuriated countenance of the Saxonian with a stare of absolute imbecility. He made no explanation. There was nothing to explain—except that the Saxonian had gone mad; or else Kennedy had. The more the diplomat thought on the latter question, the more convinced was he that he was correct. Yes, *he* had gone sheer, stark, raving mad; and this man who spoke was some phantasm conjured up by his neurotic imagination.

"Well?" demanded Von Ladenburg. "Explain—curse you! Explain! What the devil does it all mean—eh?"

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He moved toward Kennedy, and his gesture was threatening. Kennedy's hand sought his hip pocket. The gesture was unconscious, and no doubt an atavism—the remembrance of a threat in some previous age and the method of protection. Von Ladenburg noted the gesture and stopped. The heavy wits of the Teuton overhauled the events of the night. Kennedy's action in not throwing light upon them, his motion toward a concealed weapon, were all suspicious.

A life lived with death in close proximity as a penalty for a single false step had made the Saxonian keenly on the alert for treachery in any form.

As he stood there, looking into Kennedy's little, shifty eyes, now contracted with something akin to fear—the fear that comes from not understanding—a vague, indefinite idea began to form in the mind of the Saxonian. Could it be that Kennedy had repented of his actions and was now selling back to his own government? Everything

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seemed to point in that direction.

Quietly but ominously, his hand dangling, ready to grip the weapon concealed in the pocket of his loose lounge coat, the Saxonian advanced several steps and fixed Kennedy with a steely gaze.

"What did you mean by that telegram? Why have you brought me here? Why was I assaulted?" The questions were ripped out—a threat in each interrogation point.

Kennedy drew back as from a raving maniac. The glitter in Von Ladenburg's eyes terrified him. The diplomat was more or less of a normal man, and, had he known the facts of the case, would not have been possessed of any fear of Von Ladenburg—nor any man not in a supernormal state.

"What do you mean?" he asked, partly from a desire for an explanation, partly because he knew he must say something.

As he spoke, the door from which Norroy had made his exit opened, and Norroy, divested of his make-up, entered. The shrill whistle which the secret agent gave and the

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knock on the floor caused Von Ladenburg to look up. Norroy caught the light in his eyes and stepped behind a pillar.

And then the explanation came to Von Ladenburg—or, rather, the explanation which most naturally would have come to any man under the circumstances.

Kennedy had not seen Norroy nor noticed the whistle, but he did note Von Ladenburg's hand thrust quickly into his coat pocket. Immediately his own flashed out a revolver, but not sooner than Von Ladenburg.

"You traitor!" cried the Saxonian, sibilantly.

Norroy saw the flash of steel, and the two shots rang out almost simultaneously.

The secret agent rushed forward just in time to see Kennedy clap his hand to a thin streak of blood which trickled from his forehead. The diplomat held himself erect for a moment and looked down at the body of the Saxonian, which lay where it had fallen when the bullet penetrated the left side.

For a moment Kennedy was master of

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himself. Then he swayed and staggered, and he, too, went down, as stiffly as a tree which has received the final blow of the woodman's ax.

Two entrances opened—one the trapdoor, from which sprang Carson, Wammell, and Coman. The three secret agents, however, moved not a muscle when they saw a panel at the other end of the room slide back and the figures of two men, in the conventional attire of the evening, step quietly into the room.

Norroy, who had been kneeling at the side of Kennedy, looked up at the double exclamation of Carson: "The President! The secretary!"

The chief executive moved across the room, but without his customary elasticity of step. His eyes lacked luster, and he looked the picture of a man who has received a crushing blow, a great sorrow.

"You heard, your excellency?" inquired Norroy, in a low tone.

The President waved his hand toward the

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panel. "I was behind there all the time. Is he dead?"

"They are both dead, Mr. President," returned Norroy, still speaking in a low tone as befitted the presence of death. "Von Ladenburg through the heart, Kennedy through the head." Norroy had thrown his kerchief over the features of the late diplomat. The President dropped on one knee and lifted the piece of cambric.

He looked long and steadily at the features of the dead man. Then he arose, and there was a suspicion of tears in his voice as he spoke.

"I heard, Mr. Norroy," he repeated. "You have done the state a great service." He dropped the kerchief over the fast glazing eyes of Kennedy and looked downward at the inert mass which had once been a man: "But he saved my life once—and he risked his own to do it. I had always thought him my friend."

Silence fell on the room—a silence which revealed the fact that many men were breathing heavily.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNEXPECTED.

It was afternoon, in the little house on the retired street where Norroy reported to the secretary of state the intricacies of the affair which were not plain to his chief.

"But you said nothing beforehand of the coming of Von Ladenburg," said the secretary. "We had not expected his coming—nor the tragedy——"

"I was not sure that Von Ladenburg could be decoyed in that manner," Norroy explained, igniting his fifth cigarette. "It was a half-formed idea—hardly more. I do not like to promise things which may not happen, so I said nothing of it, and employed Carson on my own hand. However, I rather foresaw what would happen when Von Ladenburg and Kennedy were brought together. Both would naturally be suspi-

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cious; and, as neither could explain, each would believe the other guilty of treachery. My entrance set the spark to the tinder, and——”

“So it was premeditated, then?” broke in the secretary, almost startled.

“Hardly that. But I rather imagined that if such an end could be consummated, the United States would be free from the trouble of punishing the guilty ones, and——”

“Norroy!” interrupted the secretary. Norroy looked all attention. For a moment his chief only gazed at him—then, slowly: “You remember that Kennedy referred to you as a ‘dandified devil’?”

A faint smile wreathed the lips of the secret agent. “Why, yes,” he returned. “I do remember that airy bit of persiflage.”

“No persiflage,” stated the secretary, solemnly. “A good description—an excellent description, Yorke Norroy.”

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